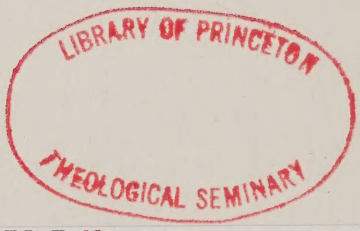

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IN

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BY

J. M. ROBERTSON

Author of "A Short History of Freethought," etc.

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CORRIGENDA.

Page 94, line 10. *Delete* "and."

Page 160, line 22. After "and" *read* "Magdala."

STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS FALLACY.

DOGMA IN MASQUERADE.

Natural Law in the Spiritual World. By HENRY DRUMMOND, F.R.S.E., F.G.S. Fourteenth Edition, completing Thirty-fourth Thousand. (London: Hodder & Stoughton.) 1884.

WHEN a work professing to reconcile theology with science passes through fourteen editions in two years, it may plausibly be assumed that religious people are somewhat anxious to see such a reconciliation effected; and when, further, such a book is extensively eulogized by religious critics and the religious public, as original, impressive, thoughtful, and convincing, it seems reasonable to suppose that it presents some of the ablest reasoning in support of theology at present forthcoming from Christian men of science. Mr. Drummond's book, then, is entitled to serious attention from all who hesitate to aspire to the bad eminence of Gallio.

It is not meant by this to suggest that the silence maintained in the scientific camp as to Mr. Drummond's book signifies indifference to his thesis: to tell the truth, Mr. Drummond is somewhat dexterous in his avoidance of propositions which it would be in the scientific man's way to contravene; just as he avoids attracting the attention of the Biblical critic proper. He enters into no argument on behalf of miracles in general or Christian miracles in particular: he says practically nothing about the old questions of the world's age, or the flood, or

design. On the contrary, he starts with the unqualified assumption that the Bible is a special revelation from a Supreme Being. "We do not demand of Nature," he says in his Introduction (p. 10), "directly to prove religion. That was never its function. Its function is to interpret." Here, perhaps, the scientist might open his eyes, and ask whether it is meant that Nature was created for the exegesis of Scripture; but he is strictly not concerned with the proposition. "Revelation," says Mr. Drummond again (p. 33), "never volunteers anything that man could discover for himself—*on the principle, probably, that it is only when he is capable of discovering it that he is capable of appreciating it.*" This last-quoted sentence seems to be one of those "particularly fine things" which a time-honoured apophthegm counsels young authors to sacrifice. On the face of it, it implies two propositions, uncommonly awkward for Mr. Drummond: first, that there is no historical corroboration of the Bible narrative; second, that men are incapable of appreciating what is revealed to them. Mr. Drummond does say some very unfortunate things explicitly; but he can hardly have meant this. His views as to the position of revelation, however, may be further inferred from yet another passage in his chapter on Biogenesis (p. 73): "The right of the spiritual world to speak of its own phenomena is as secure as the right of the natural world to speak of itself. What is science but what the natural world has said to natural men? What is revelation but what the spiritual world has said to spiritual men?" It will be seen that Mr. Drummond is a very ingenious analogist. Some of us would modestly say that science is a body of conclusions that men—genus *homo*—have arrived at from a study of Nature, which said extremely little to them until they cross-examined it; that "revelation" is something which some men have alleged; and that the

spiritual world and spiritual men are, like "the chronometer of God," names in grievous need of a definition. And Mr. Drummond does simply nothing to supply the need: from first to last he gives us no definition whatever. But how neat is his mock analogy; how engagingly confident his intimation; and how extremely handy his formula for the large and respectable class which has scruples about doing its own thinking! It is evident that the criticism of such a writer is not specially the work of the practical scientist, any more than of the historical inquirer. Properly it should fall to the orthodox theologian; and the present study, unfortunately, cannot pretend to be in the theological spirit. It is, however, very much at the service of the genuine functionary, if he is disposed, as in duty bound, to emulate its purpose. What has to be done with a writer of Mr. Drummond's unique description is to take him on his own ground and estimate his reasonings by the canons of universal logic.

Mr. Drummond is nothing if he is not systematic, and he ought to be systematically discussed; to which end a brief preliminary account of the object of his book is desirable. Briefly, then, he professes to take the leading doctrines of Christian theology, and show that they are not merely analogous to and in harmony with the leading doctrines of natural science, but identical with these doctrines; that what we call natural law is found to extend through the so-called spiritual world; that, in other words, Christian theology can be shown to be substantiated in detail by the generalizations of physical science. The complete position is that revelation cannot be proved or disproved by science or reasoning, but that, for those who accept it to start with, its truth may be made more clear by showing that theology is not the chaos it seemed to be even to the believing eye, but is identical with the body of scientific law.

The author begins by telling us that it has for years been his privilege to lecture to a class on the natural sciences on week-days, and to lecture to working men on morals and religion on Sundays. For a time, he tells us, he kept the two departments entirely separate in his mind, and on this head he expresses no sense of shame. After a while, however, he found that his modes of thinking had, without his being conscious of it, undergone a change. "I discovered myself," are his words, "enunciating spiritual law in the exact terms of biology and physics" (Preface, p. vii.). So that Mr. Drummond would appear to have taught religion and morals to the working classes, for a time, by a process of unconscious cerebration. What he began in this manner, however, he proceeded to do of set purpose; and he became convinced that whereas his "spiritual world before was a chaos of facts" and his "theology a Pythagorean system trying to make the best of phenomena apart from the idea of law," he could now arrange his theological creed on the basis of his scientific beliefs. That is to say, he did not look about for spiritual phenomena as men of science look into Nature; he took the theological formulæ of spiritual law, and proceeded to state them in terms of natural laws. This interesting literary exercise he holds to be on a par with Mr. Spencer's application of natural law to sociology; and he claims to be essentially original in his achievement. Some writers, as he points out (p. 13), had said there could be no application of natural laws of cause and effect to religion; Mr. Horace Bushnell authoritatively describing the "spiritual world" as "another system of Nature incommunicably separate from ours." Analogies between "spiritual" and natural phenomena had always been recognized; but, says Mr. Drummond, the analogies of natural and spiritual law had been overlooked; hence the dread of science

noticeable in theology. It was not that the theologian dreaded scientific fact. "No single fact in science," Mr. Drummond tranquilly observes in passing (p. 30), "has ever discredited a fact in religion." It was simply that science had a method, a system, a reign of law; whereas theology had none, and was apprehensive and jealous accordingly—an account of the matter which it is for theologians to discuss. But henceforth things are to be different. "It will be the splendid task of the theology of the future," Mr. Drummond announces (p. 52), "to.....disclose to a waning scepticism the naturalness of the supernatural." This is another of Mr. Drummond's "particularly fine things"; and a rigorous reader may incline to say that if the author be only allowed rope enough of that description he will anticipate critical justice. But the rigorous reader is apt to forget that the people who have purchased 34,000 copies of Mr. Drummond's book are for the most part not given to judicial methods of study. A very little logic enables one to perceive that to assert "the naturalness of the supernatural" is to say there is no supernatural; and that Mr. Drummond virtually undertakes to strengthen the belief in the supernatural by showing the supernatural is not supernatural. But it is safe to say that Mr. Drummond's friendly readers, from the *Spectator* downwards, will never have their equanimity shaken by logical sensitiveness to such trifles as that. And that kind of reader is not likely to be disturbed when Mr. Drummond, almost immediately after declaring that it will be a "splendid task" for theology to show that the supernatural is natural, protests (p. 54) that "there is nothing so especially exalted.....in the natural laws in themselves as to make one anxious to find them blood relations of the spiritual"; and that (p. 55) "their dignity is not as natural laws, but as spiritual laws." Mr. Drummond

evidently holds with Emerson, that "with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." His versatility of view is not less conspicuous than his fertility in aphorism.

To be scrupulously fair, we may note that there is one passage in the Introduction which might be argued to indicate a scientific reason for believing in the spiritual. It is less noteworthy in that regard, however, than as showing how Mr. Drummond reasons. He professes to take up the thesis of the work entitled *The Unseen Universe*, which is that the universe whose phenomena we see has been developed from forms of matter we cannot cognise; and that it must again pass into "unseen" forms. Mr. Drummond (p. 54) puts it thus: "There is a point of time when the energy of the universe must come to an end; and that which has its end in time cannot be infinite, it must also have had a beginning in time. Hence the unseen existed before the seen." Now, on Mr. Drummond's own showing, the writers of the *Unseen Universe* do nothing to explain how an infinite universe can ever aggregate; or how an aggregated universe can be said to have parted with all its energy so long as it coheres; or how the dead mass, as they call it, is going to disappear. But the interesting point is that two pages further on (see also p. 53) the doctrine of the unseen existing before the seen is transformed by Mr. Drummond into the doctrine of "the priority of the spiritual." The authors of the *Unseen Universe* had not pretended that the unseen ought to be called the spiritual. They represented it as a hypothetical unknown form of matter, which might have come from another unknown form. That is Mr. Drummond's scientific basis for his spiritual world.

On such methods as these, it will be generally allowed, the demonstration of an identity between natural and

spiritual laws, or between any existence and any non-existence, is not such an arduous undertaking as it would otherwise appear; but it is highly improbable that any mind, however speculative, would anticipate the manner in which Mr. Drummond accomplishes his task. He professes, indeed, in his Introduction, to make good his case in a single sentence, making, for the purpose, an extremely original application of the law of continuity, and an equally original application of the syllogism. "As the natural laws are continuous through the universe of matter and of space," he tells us (p. 41), "so will they be continuous through the universe of spirit." And then he asks, with an exquisiteness of logical simplicity which it is hardly too much to call genius: "If this be denied, what then? *Those who deny it must furnish the disproof.* The argument is founded on a principle *which is now acknowledged to be universal*, and the *onus* of disproof must be with those who may be bold enough to take up the position *that a region exists where at last the principle of continuity fails.*" That is a flower of formulated nonsense which logicians will not willingly let die. Altering the terms, but retaining the formula, we get such a proposition as this: "Those who do not believe in spiritualism say that intangible spirits cannot play banjos. But it is universally acknowledged that banjos cannot be played save by living beings, and the *onus* of disproof must lie with those who are bold enough to say that those who sound banjos are not living intelligences." We modestly assure Mr. Drummond that we never said there was a spiritual "region" where continuity ceases—our nearest approach to such a concept being our sensations in trying to follow some of his arguments—but that nevertheless we consider his proposition to amount to precisely nothing. The versatile author would perhaps say that his proposition

here was only addressed to those theologians who assert a "spiritual world," while denying that its laws are those of the natural world. But in that case why proceed, after declaring that the *onus* of disproof lies with the opposing theologian, to supply some 400 pages of proof?

The truth is, Mr. Drummond has experienced, at least for a short time, an uneasy sense that there is something wrong about his exposition of the law of continuity. He grapples with the difficulty as follows:—

> It may seem an obvious objection that many of the natural laws have no connection whatever with the spiritual world..... Gravitation, for instance—what direct application has that in the spiritual world? The reply is threefold. First, *there is no proof that it does not hold there* [!]. If the spirit be in any sense material, it certainly must hold. In the second place, gravitation may hold for the spiritual sphere, although it cannot be directly proved. The spirit may be armed with powers which enable it to rise superior to gravity. During the action of these powers gravity *need be no more suspended than in the case of a plant which rises in the air during the process of growth.* It does this in virtue of a higher law, *and in apparent defiance of the lower.* Thirdly, if the spirit be not material, it still cannot be said that gravitation ceases at that point to be continuous. It is not gravitation that ceases—it is matter.

There is so much "meat and drink" in this sort of thing for the critical mind that it may be permitted to carry the quotation further:—

> This point, however, will require development for another reason. In the case of the plant just referred to there is a principle of growth or vitality at work *superseding the attraction of gravity.* Why is there no trace of that law in the inorganic world? Is not this another instance of the discontinuousness of law? If the law of vitality has so little connection with the inorganic kingdom—*less even than gravitation with the spiritual*—what becomes of continuity? Is it not evident that each kingdom of nature has its own set of laws, which continue possibly untouched for the specific kingdom, but never extend beyond it?

It is quite true that when we pass from the inorganic to the organic we come upon a new set of laws. But the reason why the lower set do not seem to act in the higher sphere is not that they are annihilated, but that they are overruled. And the reason why the higher laws are not found operating in the lower is not because they are not continuous downwards, but because there is nothing for them there to act upon. It is not law that fails, but opportunity. The biological laws are continuous for life. Wherever there is life, that is to say, they will be found acting, just as gravitation acts wherever there is matter.

For a teacher of physical science that is tolerably funny, but a still higher point is reached in the next paragraph :—

We have purposely in the last paragraph indulged in a fallacy. We have said that the biological laws would certainly be continuous in the lower or mineral sphere were there anything there for them to act upon. Now laws do not act upon anything. It has been stated already, though apparently it cannot be too abundantly emphasized [!], that laws are only modes of operation, not themselves operators. *The accurate statement*, therefore, would be that the biological laws would be continuous in the lower sphere, *were there anything there for them, not to act upon, but to keep in order. If there is no acting going on, if there is nothing being kept in order, the responsibility does not lie with continuity. The law will always be at its post, not only when its services are required, but wherever they are possible.*

It is difficult to take seriously a passage which reads so very much like an extract from *Alice in Wonderland*; but when a book containing such writing can be pronounced "calm, judicial, scholarly," by such a journal as *Knowledge;* when the writer can be congratulated on the "accuracy of his view of law" by such an authority as the *Spectator;* and when the *Nonconformist* and the *Guardian* vie with each other and with the daily press in equivalent praise, it really becomes necessary to say a serious word. It seems needful to remind these guides of public opinion that "natural law" is simply the term for an observed constancy of relation between

given phenomena; and that to talk of such relation "keeping things in order" and being "at its post" when its "services are required" is to use language of absolute absurdity. The last-quoted paragraph, with its mock rectification of the fallacy in the preceding, is fully the more ridiculous of the two; and it leaves a rational reader with no conclusion open to him save that the author is hopelessly incapable of comprehending philosophic language. That he should cap his first absurdity by professing to have introduced it intentionally, and then thrice confounding confusion by his "accurate statement," is intelligible on no other view. The only possible theory seems to be that some friend had seen the first blunder before the book was compiled, and had gently indicated to Mr. Drummond that he was writing rather portentous nonsense; whereupon the versatile author introduced a paragraph to say that he had been fallacious on purpose—the purpose being left to the reader's imagination—and proceeded to put matters right, according to his lights. But as Mr. Drummond really could not see through his own fallacy, his mind being a sort of fallacy machine, he simply restated it in other and worse words; whereupon his friend, if further consulted, decided to leave Mr. Drummond to his fate. Our author is not one of those who would "speak disrespectfully of the equator"; he probably reveres it for being so constantly "at its post." In the next paragraph he goes on in a delightful way to remark that "a hasty glance at the present argument on the part of anyone *ill-furnished enough to confound law with substance or with cause* would probably lead to its immediate rejection." To which it may be replied that a hasty glance on anybody's part would lead to the conclusion that Mr. Drummond confounded law with function and energy; and that the most leisurely reading would fail to induce repentance.

After he has got through the jungle of his Introduction, Mr. Drummond's first step is to lay down the scientific doctrine of Biogenesis, or the derivation of life from life, and to show how that corresponds with Christian theology. And at the very outset of the chapter on Biogenesis we have a sample of scientific exposition which gives cause to suspect that the writer has worse faults than incompetence. He tells the well-known story of Dr. Bastian's attempts to prove spontaneous generation; how Professor Tyndall showed that Bastian's experiments must have been faulty; and how the Professor came to the conclusion that "no shred of trustworthy *experimental testimony* exists to prove that life *in our day* has ever appeared independently of antecedent life." This we all knew. But Mr. Drummond would feel himself falling below his task if he did not get more out of a scientific proposition than ordinary eyes can see in it; and so, after referring to the experiments of Mr. Dallinger, who showed the almost indestructible vitality (Mr. Drummond drops the "almost") of some of the lower forms of life, he presents us (p. 63, also p. 79) with this summing up:—"These experiments have practically closed the question. A decided and authoritative conclusion has now taken its place in science. So far as science can settle anything, this question is settled. The attempt to get the living out of the dead has failed. Spontaneous generation has had to be given up." And all through his book Mr. Drummond continues thus to imply that it has been scientifically proved that the living could never have arisen from the non-living. He has here dealt as arbitrarily with natural law in the concrete as he had previously done with it in the abstract. His universal negative to spontaneous generation is the merest *non-sequitur*. All that has really been done in the matter of spontaneous generation thus far is to

rebut the assertion that life can come from non-life *in the normal condition of things on this globe.* To say that "spontaneous generation has had to be given up"—in the full sense of that phrase—is to say that the evolution theory is admittedly incapable of completion. So far from giving up the hypothesis of spontaneous generation, science will never, can never rest until that hypothesis is transformed into a body of proof. The law of continuity, on which Mr. Drummond so ingenuously professes to found his case, is incomplete until spontaneous generation is placed on a basis of certitude. Mr. Drummond himself tells us that the law of continuity is now universally acknowledged. That is practically the case, as regards the history of life on the globe, because the difficulty about the first appearance is the only serious breach. But if it were scientifically decided that life could *not* evolve from non-life—the organic from the inorganic—the law of continuity would be broken down. And Mr. Drummond, in representing that spontaneous generation can never have happened, is taking the ground from under his own feet before he has made a single step. He not only misrepresents what science teaches; he goes the length of implying that science assumes miracle. "Of that strange borderland between the dead and the living," he observes (p. 69), "science is silent. It is as if God had placed everything in earth and heaven in the hands of Nature, but reserved a point at the genesis of life for His direct appearing." And on p. 76 we have: "In either case, the first step in peopling these worlds [natural and "spiritual"] with the appropriate living forms is virtually miracle." And the man who writes thus professes to accept the law of continuity, and to base his theology on science!

It might be thought that, after such a stroke as this, Mr. Drummond would have gone a little way with some

wariness, and without so openly playing fast and loose with fact and logic. But the next step in his argument is, if possible, more outrageous still. The analogy* he proceeds to draw between natural and spiritual law, in regard to Biogenesis, is this: That whereas life can only come from life in the natural world, so in the "spiritual world" life can only come from Jesus Christ. The law of Biogenesis, according to Mr. Drummond (pp. 71-74), is spiritually formulated in these two texts: "Except a man be born again.....except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." It must be clearly understood that our author literally asserts believing Christians to be spiritually alive, and all other human beings spiritually dead. A tolerably enlightened reader is apt to miss Mr. Drummond's meaning by taking his language on this head to be metaphorical, but there can be no dispute as to its precise and literal quality. The distinction between the best of men who do not believe in Christ and those who do, we are told (p. 81), "is the same as that between the organic and the inorganic, the living and the dead." "The difference," it is laid down again (p. 82), "between the spiritual man and the natural man is not a difference of development, but of generation. It is a distinction of quality, not of quantity. A man cannot rise by any natural development from 'morality touched by emotion' to 'morality touched by life.'" Again we have (p. 130): "The Christian.....like the poet, is born, not made." "The spiritual man.....is a new creation born from above" (p. 65). "This life comes suddenly" (p. 93). So the argument is explicit, that as life could only arise

* Mr. Drummond says (p. 76), "between the laws there is no analogy; there is continuity"; but he explains that he uses the term "analogy" at times for convenience.

on the earth by a supernatural act, by the direct interposition of God, so spiritual life can only arise in a man's personality by the interposition of Jesus. See, now, how this compares with the scientific doctrine of Biogenesis. That simply asserts that *at present* life comes from life —organism from organism. Science knows nothing whatever of a creation of life by miracle. That is Theogenesis—a conception not within the range of science as the word is at present understood. What Mr. Drummond does is to take the scientific doctrine of Biogenesis, tack on to it the lawless dogma of Theogenesis, and then proceed to allege that the scientific generalization is identical with a theological dogma which asserts nothing whatever that is even remotely comparable to Biogenesis, but a perpetually repeated Theogenesis—an incalculable series of miracles. If it were asserted that Christians produced Christians, that spiritual life went from father or mother to son and daughter, that would indeed be a sort of analogy to Biogenesis. If spiritual life were alleged to be hereditary, like insanity, or even if it were communicable from one person to another, it might be pretended that it conformed to the law of Biogenesis. But when the reasoner contends in the most explicit terms that this is not so, but that each Christian gets his spiritual life, suddenly and miraculously, direct from the Deity, we can but say that we have not found such audacity—no, not in Israel. What he has done is to falsify biology at the outset of his exposition, to impose upon it a theological doctrine of catastrophism, and then to pretend that is analogous or identical with a so-called spiritual process which is not even comparable to a process of Biogenesis from a catastrophic beginning, but is catastrophic at every step! Of course, *c'est le premier pas qui coûte;* but the undertaking of Saint Denis was modest beside that of Mr. Drummond. The saint's experiment barely involved

a double miracle : Mr. Drummond's involves millions. With him you have to assume first a miracle of Theogenesis ; next, an endless series of miracles of spiritual Theogenesis ; and in the act you introduce the miracle of the incarnation of Deity in the person of Jesus. That is how we make a beginning in the process of showing that theology is identical with scientific law : we have only to adopt three miracle concepts and to turn science out of doors.

And Mr. Drummond's progress is worthy of his beginning. The chapter on Biogenesis is followed by one on Degeneration, in which it is sought to show that the phenomena of degeneration in natural life are directly analogous to those of degeneration in spiritual life. We got in the previous chapter, by a process of exclusion, a negative knowledge of what Mr. Drummond regards as the spiritual life—that it is not the intellectual or moral life in the ordinary sense of these phrases, but a special and peculiar life, set up only in the souls of orthodox Christians, by the miraculous action of Deity. Seeing, then, that in his second chapter our author declares all men to have souls, he is in the picturesque position of asserting that many men have souls which are not spiritually alive. Not being spiritually alive, it might be presumed they are naturally alive ; but then natural life, in the terms of Mr. Drummond's exposition, is the life of organisms, and no theology alleges that the soul is an organism. So that Mr. Drummond must be understood to assert three kinds of life : the spiritual life—that of the true Christian ; the natural life—that which he has in common with all organisms ; and a third kind of life—that of the non-Christian soul, which is neither one nor the other, though it would appear to go on in the spiritual world. If, however, we are to trace natural law in the spiritual world in regard to the process of degeneration, it must be by exhibiting

degeneration in the spiritual life proper. Yet, incredible as it may seem, Mr. Drummond does not attempt to show that there is any such thing. What he does in this chapter is to show a species of what he calls degeneration in the cases of men who have, on his own definition, never had the spiritual life at all. The only phenomena suggestive of spiritual degeneration to which he calls our attention occur among those whom he himself describes as the spiritually dead. Taking as an illustration the tendency of the domestic pigeon, when allowed to go wild in a wild region, to revert to the original plain and ungraceful type of rock-pigeon, Mr. Drummond intimates (p. 98) in his unsophisticated terminology, that

> the natural *law* by which such a change occurs is called *the principle of reversion to type.* "Now," he explains (p. 98), "the same thing exactly would happen to you or me.....If a man neglect himself for a few years, he will change into a worse man and a lower man. If it is his body that he neglects, he will deteriorate into a wild and bestial savage.....If it is his mind, it will degenerate into imbecility and madness.....If he neglect his conscience, it will run off into lawlessness and vice. Or lastly, if it is his soul, it must inevitably atrophy, drop off in ruin and decay."

So that it would appear (see also p. 100) a man's soul may be dead before his body. But the main point to be noticed in this new system of psychology, with its divisions of soul, mind, and conscience, is that Mr. Drummond is dealing solely with degeneration in the unspiritual man, who, he himself told us, is to the spiritual man what the inorganic is to the organic. Describing the case of a man who has neglected his soul till it dies, he says: "Instead of aspiring to conversion to a higher type, he submits by a law of Nature to reversion to a lower. This is degeneration." If the phrase about conversion to a higher type counts for anything in the argument, it implies that a single

pigeon may by aspiration rise to a higher type, or go through the entire process of reversion to the prior. It seems as likely as not that Mr. Drummond believes in the occurrence of such transformations; but, however that may be, the degeneration he speaks of, on his own showing, is not degeneration in the spiritual life. The man instanced had, *ex hypothesi*, never reached spiritual life: he was to the spiritually alive "as the inorganic to the organic." In point of fact, he is denounced because, being inorganic, he did not become organic by aspiration; yet all the while he is credited with the remarkable feat of degenerating from a condition of spiritual non-existence to one of death of the soul, whatever that may be. So that what we get by the second chapter is an annihilation of the ground taken up in the first; which, in its turn, annihilated the ground taken up in the Introduction. The demonstration of natural law in the spiritual world, it will be seen, resembles nothing so much as the record of a celebrated negative quantity in the fauna of Iceland.

Of course the process of destroying all that went before cannot well be carried on unremittingly through the remaining chapters of the book, on Growth, Death, Mortification, Eternal Life, Environment, Conformity to Type, Semi-Parasitism, Parasitism, and Classification. The chapter on Growth is an amplification of that on Biogenesis—the old thesis being returned to now that it is convenient to do so. The doctrine now is that growth has two characteristics, spontaneousness and mysteriousness. You do not try to grow; you simply feed and live properly, and you grow. So with your soul after it has become spiritually alive. Christians, Mr. Drummond tells us, are constantly making themselves uncomfortable in the attempt to grow spiritually, whereas all they have to do is to let themselves grow. To bring out his meaning, he restates his temporarily

discarded doctrine of the miraculous character of the spiritual life.

> Grant for a moment [he says, p. 131] that by hard work and self-restraint a man may attain to a very high character. It is not denied that this can be done. But what is denied is that this is growth, and that this process is Christianity. *The fact that you can account for it proves that it is not growth.* For growth is mysterious : *the peculiarity of it is that you cannot account for it.*

Lest any misconceive the force of the last clause, be it explained that Mr. Drummond has exhibited the "accuracy of his view of law," which so impresses the *Spectator*, by the intimation (p. 86) that "*the doctrines of conservation and transformation of energy.....do not hold for vitality.*" Vitality, then, being subject to no physical laws, and growth even in organisms being a miracle, "the problem of the Christian life finally is simplified to this—man has but to preserve the right attitude" (p. 140). But why "preserve"? If Mr. Drummond had adhered all along to the position of his chapter on Biogenesis, he would have had to argue that by getting into the wrong attitude the Christian might degenerate; but Mr. Drummond's purpose is to show that the Calvinistic theology is scientific; and that system teaches that degeneration is not possible to the believing Christian. The doctrines of election and of the perseverance of the saints are to the effect that as men are saved by God's free grace, so they cannot fall away from grace. That being so, it is impossible for the Christian to get into the wrong "attitude." It would appear to be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for Mr. Drummond to make an approach to proving his case in a single detail—or to formulate a decently logical argument, for that matter.

Passing from the chapter on Growth to that on Death, we find that as in his third chapter Mr. Drummond returns to the deserted position of his first, so in his

fourth he reverts to that of his second. This versatility is the prominent feature of his method; and all that a rival theologian would have to do would be to set one chapter against another, and make Mr. Drummond refute himself. To expose Mr. Drummond's perversions of science there is needed only the most ordinary knowledge of the generalizations of science; but to refute his argument as a whole there is required no knowledge of science whatever. A comparison of chapters is sufficient. The chapter on Death is an amplification of the previous three-card trick of degeneration. If it was to do anything whatever to fulfil the promise of the Introduction, it ought to show that the spiritual life is affected by death just as the natural life is. But just as the pretended degeneration in the spiritual world was on Mr. Drummond's own showing a degeneration from spiritual unbornness to another death, so the pretended death in the spiritual world is on his own showing the death of the already spiritually dead. He takes (p. 147) Mr. Spencer's definition of life as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations," and he proceeds to apply it. And here he does seem for a moment to realize the chaos into which he has manipulated his argument; for he proceeds hastily to show that death is a relative term. The bird, he ingeniously reasons, has a wider environment than the plant; the man a wider than the bird; and as the plant is practically dead to a large part of the bird's environment, so the bird is dead to a large part of the man's. And so, further, a man may be dead to the spiritual environment, by which Mr. Drummond means Deity. An instructed reader will turn away from this sort of thing with a yawn; but to any open-minded student who may still be at the stage of thought of the *Spectator* and *Knowledge*, in which such reasoning inspires respect,

it is well to point out in so many words that the argument before us is a piece of nugatory sophistry. To call the plant dead to the bird's environment, or the bird to the man's, is not to use the language of science at all. Death in the natural world is the *cessation* of a mode of life; and on Mr. Drummond's principle spiritual death should be the cessation of spiritual life. But he has committed himself to the proposition that the natural man is spiritually dead to start with; that is, he is, compared with the Christian, as the inorganic to the organic. Since, then, Mr. Drummond's theology pledges him to the doctrine that the spiritually living soul, at least, cannot die, the only conclusion he can present to us is that a man who, not knowing God to begin with, does not keep up his communion with God, will die spiritually—that the spiritually dead man, if he does not take care, will spiritually die over again. "You may dwarf a soul," the author says (p. 173), "just as you can dwarf a plant, by depriving it of a full environment"; and this dwarfing, we are informed by our accurate doctor of law, is "to science" an "instance of arrested development; and to religion it presents the spectacle of a corpse—a living death." Which means, according to the argument, that a bird is "to science" an instance of arrested development, and is a corpse, in that it is not a man; and that every organism is dwarfed and dead, in that its environment is limited.

The courage with which Mr. Drummond disposes of his difficulties is no less remarkable than the facility with which he multiplies them. On page 11, he tells us that "it is the want of the discerning faculty, the clairvoyant power of seeing the eternal in the temporal, rather than the failure of the reason, that begets [*sic*] the sceptic." This explanation he is good enough to repeat. The endeavours of well-meaning Christians to show that the Agnostic really does know what he

denies, our philosopher tells us (pp. 78, 160), are quite misplaced. The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. The Agnostic is "blind and deaf, dumb, torpid, and dead to the spiritual world." But it is rather obvious that, if the Agnostic cannot help himself, there is little use in seeking to convert him; and to the common sense in these days there is apt to be something revolting in denunciation of the blind because they cannot see; so that, at one stage of his argument, Mr. Drummond—possibly himself perceiving dimly the singular nature of his creed—virtuously protests (p. 105) that "*there is an affectation* that religious truths lie beyond the sphere of the comprehension which serves men in ordinary things"—what he calls an affectation being simply his own distinct and repeatedly declared doctrine. "Such harmonies are in" theological souls.

The candid reader will not deny the entertaining quality of all this, but it is too much to expect that his interest will continue without flagging to the end. Even absurdity palls, and it must suffice to take a comprehensive glance at the remainder of Mr. Drummond's exposition, though the sets of propositions above noticed are profusely elaborated as the book goes on, and the chapter on Mortification embraces even a more picturesque series of feats in logical sleight-of-hand than any of those preceding it. The new-born Christian—the spiritually-alive man—we are told (p. 179), passes at the moment of his spiritual birth into a new environment; whereupon there ensues a conflict of the two environments. The old "competes doggedly [!] with the new environment for a share of the correspondence [!]," and it is the business of the Christian to cut himself off from the old environment. Before, we were told that he had only to maintain the right attitude; now we learn that he has to make, as it were, a variety of medical and

surgical operations on himself. Mr. Drummond formulates the amended doctrine thus (p. 182) :—

> The methods by which the spiritual man is to withdraw himself from the old environment, or from the part of it which will directly hinder the spiritual life, are three in number—
>
> First, Suicide.
> Second, Mortification.
> Third, Limitation.

To the eye of mere human reason, the analogue of natural suicide in the spiritual life would be a voluntary destruction of his spiritual life by the spiritually-alive man ; but, of course, on the theological premisses, there can be no such thing ; and what Mr. Drummond gives us as the analogous phenomenon is a process of dying to sin, by entirely leaving the sinful environment. As if renunciation of any section of his environment by a human being were scientifically definable as suicide. But the absolute emptiness of the doctrine becomes more apparent when we find that the sinful environment is simply what every well-meaning man shuns, even when, in the language of Mr. Drummond, he is spiritually dead. He is to control his temper and avoid drunkenness—just to do what Mr. Drummond admits any spiritually dead man may do. And this is spiritual suicide—not even, as before, killing the dead man, but killing the vices that even the dead man is able to kill. And so with mortification. Analogically, spiritual mortification would be death of part of the soul ; but as Mr. Drummond describes it, it is the mere abstinence from a particular vice ; that is, a perfectly natural process, not a spiritual one at all. Here, indeed, it might be pretended that natural and spiritual are identical ; but the identity is made out by simply calling the natural spiritual. So, again, with limitation. Spiritual limitation—a sufficiently fatuous term—is not a limiting of a spiritual function at all, but a gradual abstinence

from morally unhealthy function—such an abstinence as is daily effected by the man whom Mr. Drummond calls spiritually dead. So that spiritual suicide, spiritual mortification, and spiritual limitation are one and the same thing—mere avoidance of vice! We have simply the snakes of Iceland over again in every chapter; and for purposes of description the book might be condensed on the old model: "Chapter I. Concerning Biogenesis. There is no Biogenesis in the spiritual world, only Theogenesis." "Chapter II. Concerning Degeneration. There is no degeneration in the spiritual life, but there is degeneration in a kind of life which is spiritual death." "Concerning Death. The man who has spiritual life cannot die; but dead men do die in the spiritual world."

The absurdities of the book are combined, consummated, and crowned in the chapter on Eternal Life. Mr. Drummond quotes (p. 203) Mr. Spencer's observation that "perfect correspondence would be perfect life," and then goes on to argue in his diffuse way that in the spiritual world eternal life—that is, not merely endless life, but the highest and fullest life—is attained by the spiritual individual attaining to perfect correspondence with God. It is again necessary to obtrude a piece of elementary scientific information on a world enlightened by the *Spectator* and *Knowledge*—the intimation, namely, that in the natural world there is no such thing as perfect correspondence existing or conceivable. Mr. Drummond himself has some dim perception of this. As he puts it in his special dialect (p. 103): "One cannot say it is natural for a plant to live. Examine its nature fully, and you have to admit that its natural tendency is to die." So be it; but how then about natural law in the spiritual world, where there is no cessation of spiritual life? Again, it is even as with the ophidia of Iceland.

It is usually remarked by instructed people, when they have been induced to read this ridiculous book, that it is not worth serious answer; and indeed its imbecilities, when analyzed, do seem too abject for discussion. But there is a serious side to the phenomenon. It is not merely that the trumpeting of the book by prominent journalistic guides of public opinion, the demand for it among orthodox readers, and the acclamations bestowed by them on Mr. Drummond—who has been welcomed as a lecturer at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution on the strength of his book—it is not merely that all this conveys a grievous impression of the average standard of culture and intelligence in the nation. There is a more serious consideration still—the fact, namely, that after setting aside the whole medley of fallacy and contradiction which constitutes Mr. Drummond's reconciliation of religion and science, we find remaining a theory of morals which is morbid and pernicious beyond description. Instead of seeing in natural science the refutation of the monstrous morality of Calvinism, with its systematic reading of the lessons of life backwards, he reads Calvinism into Nature, as thus (p. 105): "We have looked round the wards of a hospital, a prison, or a madhouse, and seen there Nature at work *squaring her accounts with sin*." That is to say, if a gale blows down a tile from a roof so that it strikes and maims someone, the injury is a punishment for sin. If a man be thrown from his horse, and so have his brain injured and become insane, his insanity is a punishment for sin. Or if a man be born with homicidal mania and obey his overwhelming impulse, he is to be treated as a voluntary offender. If that be not meant, Mr. Drummond's sentence means nothing. And this Calvinistic superstition runs through his talk about science till the frightful passes into the purely grotesque. Thus we are told of the *crustacea* of the

Mammoth Cave of Kentucky (p. 114) that they "*have chosen to abide in darkness.* Therefore they have become fitted for it. By refusing to see they have waived the right to see. *And Nature has grimly humoured them. Nature had to do it by her very constitution.*" But the very sublimity of the absurd is reached in the chapters on Parasitism and Semi-Parasitism, where we are told (p. 319) that parasitism is "one of the gravest crimes in Nature," and—highest flight of all—"*a breach of the law of evolution*"*!* Is it necessary, or is it of any use, to proclaim on the house-top that parasitism *is* evolution? that evolution is simply the process of life, of which parasitism is a feature? that the life of the parasite is as perfectly natural as that of any other organism whatever? that the parasite is no more "punished," or subjected to suffering, than any other creature?

Enough of the nonsense; but let our last word on this book be a protest against its execrable ethics. If we are to revert to the theology which burned heretics while declaring that God foreordained they should be heretics; if we are to adopt the psychology which chained and scourged the madman; if we are to embrace the morality which declared the leper accursed, and deprived him of his possessions; if we are to return to the moral darkness of Calvinism and the ages of faith—then we may adopt Mr. Drummond's figment of natural law in a theological world, and bolster up myth with dogma, lawless premiss with lawless conclusion, degrading reason to the level of a beast of burden for superstition. But if there is a nobler fate in store for men, this latest emanation of chaos will pass to the limbo of all insanities.

MR. LANG ON THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION.

I.

It is Mr. Lang's peculiar felicity to make all topics interesting, and so to win new students of a catholic type for studies which, to begin with, are apt to be in the hands of one-idea'd enthusiasts. Perhaps it is his very gift of vitalizing things that sets him upon some very unpromising pursuits, such as the lavendering of the grave-linen of the forgotten 'Forty-Five. But when it puts him upon handling themes of permanent or present interest, such as those of anthropology and culture-origins, it becomes a means of intellectual grace for which all lovers of knowledge should be grateful.

That the gift of arousing and holding interest, however, is not always fully matched by the gift of satisfying judgment, is the excuse for the following criticism of Mr. Lang's recent work on *The Making of Religion*, a book which not only contains staggering difficulties of its own, but creates others still greater when read with recollection of his earlier treatise on *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, recently defended by him in his volume entitled *Modern Mythology*, and his essay* on what he declined to call Hebrew Mythology. Concerning the Hebrews Mr. Lang argued, in his character of mythological expert, that even their quasi-mythology was clearly

* *New Review*, vol. i., 1889.

supernormal, or at least abnormal; mythology in general being, as he had already shown in his book, the trivial and irrational product of the child-like mind of the savage. In Mr. Lang's latest book, the said savage is in turn raised, in respect of his "mediums" and other occultists, to the status of the supernormal. In the earlier treatise, it will be remembered, the absurdity and indecency of myths were constantly accounted for as being simply normal phenomena of savagery. The old idea that the myths were often primarily ethical and philosophical allegories—an idea already in large part dropped from scientific mythology—was there treated as doubly discredited in the light of the lore of evolution and anthropology. That savages, though capable of a sort of spasmodic monotheism or higher theism, are irrational, indecent, and absurd in their speculative thinking, was the constant—the really too constant—burden of Mr. Lang's exposition. And now, without a word of recantation, or more than a passing avowal of new points of view, we get from Mr. Lang, in *The Making of Religion*, a no less explicit and no less reiterated assurance that these same savages have a quite philosophic idea of a Supreme Being;* that they are practically as much monotheists as almost any of the civilized races;† that they have special powers of telepathy;‡ that their idea of a Supreme Being seems to be at least as old as their fetishism or their totemism;§ and that their ethical doctrine is often high—so high that they are in some cases entitled to regard Christians as corrupting their neophytes by evil communications.‖ One's first reaction takes the form of a puzzled query: Are we then to think better of the

* Pp. 57, 183, 208.

† Pp. 189, *note*, 181.

‡ Pp. 61, 65, 76, 78, etc.

§ Pp. 175, 186, 206, 207, etc.

‖ P. 195.

mythology because of the religion ; *were* the absurd and indecent myths after all the allegories of moral-minded monotheists ; or is the Theism now to be recognized as intellectually on all fours with the Mythology ?

Pursuing the problem, we note that Mr. Lang claims to reconcile this view of savage religious life with the principle of evolution, to which he swore allegiance in his work on mythology, and to which he still professes to be faithful. His theory is, in brief, that savages do not, and did not, get their God-idea by way of their ghost-idea ; that they seem rather to have a God-idea before they have ghost-ideas ; that they probably got it by way of their "supernormal" perceptions ; and that what has happened in respect of their spiritism in general is a process of intellectual and moral degeneration, though somehow the higher theistic and moral ideas subsist alongside of the degenerate ones—this survival being, in fact, the ground for the surmise of pristine elevation.

It will be at once seen that this theorem cannot be sustained without a change in the general colouring of the picture of savage lore presented in *Myth, Ritual, and Religion.* The most that was there urged for the religion of the lower races was that "in a certain sense, probably any race of men may be called monotheistic"; that "in moments of truly religious thought, even the lowest tribes turn their minds towards a guardian, a higher power"; that whenever man thus turns towards such a guardian he is "for the moment a theist, and often a monotheist";* but that all the same the student must "beware of supposing that the Australians believe in a Creator in our sense, because the Narringeri, for example, say that Nurundere 'made everything.' *Nurundere is but an idealised wizard and hunter,* with a

* *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, ii., 42-44.

rival of his species."* We are there told further, on the one hand, that "The Australians have been somewhat childishly represented as believing in a Trinity, Brewin, Bullumdut, and Bankan. Brewin is really a baddish spirit, a familiar of sorcerers. Bullumdut and Bankan 'are not so bad as Brewin';"† and on the other hand that "the conception of Brewin is about as near as the Kurnai get to the idea of a God; their conferring of his name on a powerful sorcerer is therefore a point of importance and interest."‡ It is of these same Kurnai that Mr. Lang now tells us, *following the same authorities*, that their "mysteries and ethical teaching are under the sanction of their Supreme Being," and that "the religion patronized by the [*sic*] Australian Supreme Being, and inculcated in his mysteries, is actually used to counteract the immoral character which natives acquire by associating with Anglo-Saxon Christians."§ Yet again, concerning the Australian God Baiame, of whom "a pleasing view" was communicated in the earlier book, we were told that he was called "the great master" who "destroys the bad," and who made the world and man; but that, "though 'immortal, powerful, and good,' Baiame assists at the initiatory mysteries, about which the less said the better."‖ It is of the mysteries of the relatively baddish God Brewin, or at least of a God to whom Brewin closely approximates, that Mr. Lang now thinks it well to say as much in praise as some of his Christian

* *Id.*, i., 168. [It is to be noted that Mr. Lang has to a large extent reconstructed the exposition of this part of his work in the new edition (1899). I leave my criticism as before, for its own justification, charging on the re-written argument of *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* the fallacies of *The Making of Religion*.]

† *Id.*, ii., 8. ‡ *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, i., 106.

§ *The Making of Religion*, p. 195.

‖ *Myth Ritual, and Religion*, ii., 8.

readers will care to stand, though he again admits in a footnote that other Australian mysteries "are neither moral nor theistic." It is fair to note, too, that he finally avows of the Kurnai Supreme Being, "Meanwhile the mythology of the God is a kind of joke, with no sacredness about it."*

Now, the study of these avowed anomalies might serve, for one thing, to give pause to Mr. Lang in his habit of pronouncing all groups of mythological interpretations worthless which give different views of a given God. If he ever finds that two mythologists respectively explain a given deity as standing for lightning and dawn, or sun and storm, he straightway decides that one must be wrong, and that in the meantime neither is entitled to credit. His dismissals of many interpretations in this fashion are among the most unconvincing passages of his earlier book. To any considerate student it is clear that most Gods combined incongruous attributes, that the worshippers' habit of mind was syncretic or rather muddling, and that to decide which of a God's attributes came first is always a difficult, and apt to be an idle, undertaking. The essential fact is rather the combination than the point of priority. And the fact of the combination might be supposed to be intelligible enough to a student who notes how savages to-day muddle up the attributes of their Gods, and combine good ethical doctrine with pre-ethical practice. But Mr. Lang for his own part, in his new theorem of the origin of religion, sets up a species of contradiction that is not merely ostensible but vital, a clashing of hypotheses which, though he claims to have unified them, are fundamentally destructive of each other. If self-contradiction is ever fatal to a theory, it is so now to his.

* *The Making of Religion*, p. 197.

II.

The crux of Mr. Lang's new theory, which I propose to examine on its merits, is its alleged conformity to the theory of evolution, a certification which he holds to be lacking to the ordinary rationalistic conception of the origin of religion, though that was expressly framed in terms of the evolutionary view. The anthropologist, Mr. Lang thinks, has not answered the plain man's question: "Having got your idea of spirit into the savage's mind, how does he develop out of it what I call God?" It will be seen that the plain man here is himself a bit of an anthropologist, and he is rather anthropological than plain in Mr. Lang's paraphrase:—

"God cannot be a reflection from human kings where there are no kings; nor a president elected out of a polytheistic society of Gods where there is as yet no polytheism; nor an ideal first ancestor where men do not worship their ancestors; while, again, the spirit of a man who died, real or ideal, does not answer to the usual savage conception of the Creator" (p. 186).

But here, as it happens, the anthropology is of a kind which the plain man who is also open-minded can confute as fallacious. Mr. Lang promises evidence for the assumptions in the passage quoted; but he does not, and in the nature of the case he cannot, produce real evidence. Even if he could prove, which he certainly does not, that his new "monotheistic" savage is not all the while a polytheist,* he cannot possibly prove that the savage's ancestors were not polytheists, or that they did not select a head-God out of many. And this is so far the turning point of the problem. The vigilant

* The actual wording of Mr. Lang's promise of evidence is: "All this will become much more obvious as we study in detail the *highest* gods of the lowest races." That is, he admits the polytheism of those very races to whom he has just denied it by implication.

anthropologist and the thoughtful plain man alike will at once see in the same way that the phrase, "where there *are* no kings," is beside the main point. To have any argumentative weight, the proposition should run, "where there are *and have been* no kings." Mr. Lang might as well tell us that the institution of the presidency in the United States "cannot be a reflection from human kings where there *are* no kings." We know that it is such a reflection, and that there were similar phenomena in ancient Rome. And in a savage tribe with no records, and living under conditions of degeneration, kings or chiefs might exist and pass away and leave "reflections" in theology when no historical memory or trace of them remained. In point of fact Mr. Lang, in his Appendix D, admits that his great authority, Mr. Howitt, in his tract on "The Organization of Australian Races," attaches more of the idea of power to head-men than do other inquirers. That is to say, Mr. Lang has perhaps been proceeding on wrong premisses even as regards existing Australians. And as nearly all anthropologists have seen in the Australians a degenerating phase of savagery, the presumption of an anterior and more energetic stage, with many of the normal phenomena of savagery, is not only reasonable; it is *ad interim* compulsory. On this view, the question of ancestor-worship goes the same way. Not that we are at all committed in hierology to the assumption that the God-idea is reached by way of the conception of an ideal first ancestor. In the reaction against solarist mythology, the theories of Mr. Spencer have had somewhat undue prominence; and some of us are satisfied that the process of God-making was much more complex than it appears in the *simpliste* formulas of the "Ghost" school. As Mr. Lang notes,* it is open to

* P. 320.

anyone to argue with M. Réville that, instead of a first ancestor being promoted to Godhood, the otherwise evolved God was figured as the first ancestor. But either way, there is nothing to disprove the hypothesis that ancestor-worship entered into the framing of the God-idea of any of the Australians, even if they have no ancestor-worship at present. Again, on Mr. Lang's remark that "the spirit of a man who died.....does not answer to the usual savage conception of the Creator," it may suffice for the present to point to his own unrepudiated words, above cited, as to the gods Nurundere and Brewin.

Here, however, Mr. Lang's argument answers that the Australian ethical concepts with which it goes on to deal are not low but high, higher than those of savages who are in a more energetic stage, with chiefs and ancestor-worship; and that we are accordingly driven to infer some other source for them than one of such normal savagery. We cannot, he implies, posit at once tribal social degeneration and, *per contra*, an ethical advance. If the Australian got his God-idea through adaptation of tribal phenomena and ancestor-worship, whence could he get an ethic of unselfishness which transcends and censures ordinary Christian practice? The answer here, though simple, involves a further analysis.

In leading up to his position concerning savage ethics, Mr. Lang cites* from Darwin's Journal the case of the Fuegian, York, who, telling how his brother killed an enemy that was poaching, said: "Rain come down; snow come down; hail come down; wind blow, blow, very much blow. Very bad to kill man. Big man in woods no like it, he very angry." On which Mr. Lang comments: "Here be ethics in savage religion. The

* P. 188.

Sixth Commandment is in force. The Being also prohibits the slaying of flappers before they can fly. 'Very bad to shoot little duck; come wind, come rain, blow, very much blow.'" On these data Mr. Lang preliminarily observes that the "ethical judge of perhaps the lowest savages 'makes for righteousness,' and searches the heart. His morality is *so much above* the ordinary savage standard that he regards the slaying of a stranger and an enemy, caught red-handed, as a sin." One cannot but see here an odd confusion, and cannot but suspect that the confusion is the basis of Mr. Lang's new theory.

To begin with, the particular savage under notice expounds his ethic in his own person, not as a precept laid down for him and remotely obeyed, but as his own conviction. What, then, is meant by *his* "ordinary" morality? If it be meant that in other cases the same savage would kill young ducks and poachers, or that he would kill other people under other circumstances, is it implied that in those cases he has no ethical notions at all? If so, what is the solution? There is none. Mr. Lang's argument leaves us to the bewildering view that the lowest savage has an ideal ethical judge who condemns some murders and does not condemn worse murders; who may condone theft, but not the killing of ducks before they can fly. This Mr. Lang takes to be evidence of an ethical development so high as to need "supernormal" explanations. Now, the true explanation of the matter, so strangely missed by Mr. Lang, is perfectly simple. The very story he cites is a proof that York's theistic ethics were no higher than his "ordinary standard"; that, in fact, his standards were all of a piece. What York did was not to condemn a given murder in terms of an *à priori* theistic ethic, but to infer that the God condemned it because much rain and wind followed on the act. He put the killing of the

poacher and the killing of the young duck on exactly the same level, because he had seen the same phenomena follow in the two cases. As the story stands, we are entitled to infer that but for the ensuing storms he would have seen no harm in either case. Mr, Lang's "Sixth Commandment" is pure fancy. On his method of interpretation, the sailors in the *Ancient Mariner* were at the height of ethical development when they averred that the slayer of the albatross had "killed the bird that made the breeze to blow," and penalized him accordingly ; though they were capable of praising him for the same act when they saw cause to suppose that the albatross had "brought the fog and mist."

Mr. Lang's ethical Fuegian being found thus delusive, we are put somewhat on our guard as to his ethical Australian. But, remembering that savages *do* vary greatly in their ethical practice, and that such variation is in terms of the variations of organism and environment, we are in no way perplexed by the evidence he proceeds to adduce, to the effect that the Australians connect a teaching of unselfishness with their God-idea. In this connection Mr. Lang censures Mr. Huxley, justly enough, for the assertion that among these savages "theology is wholly independent of ethics." Unfortunately that assertion is on all fours with Mr. Lang's own former thesis, that "religion in its true guise" is something essentially different from "the *religio*, which is a tissue of barbarous fears, misgivings, and apprehensions," the two things coming in contact only "by accident."*

Mr. Huxley, of course, as a professed Naturalist, ought to have known better ; but Mr. Lang's sudden change from the attitude of denial of the normal connection of savage ethic and savage theology to the

* *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, ii., 129, 165.

affirmation of it, raises the unappeasable suspicion that he has been willing to see the fact only when it appeared to him to give him a new weapon against the Naturalists. Yet when all is said he does but obtrude certain phenomena which other Naturalists have repeatedly dwelt upon.

The phenomena chiefly insisted on by Mr. Lang as proving a high ethical development among savages, are the practical unselfishness of the Australian blacks in their domestic life, and their inculcation of an unselfish ethic on the young as part of their religious mysteries. Here, probably, the phenomena are not misinterpreted, so far as they go; the error lies in Mr. Lang's unwarrantable assumption that they point to some "supernormal" origin—an assumption made in terms of an empirical or traditional notion as to ethical evolution. By substituting induction for arbitrary deduction, we dispose of both the assumption and the problem. It is unfortunately the fact that races in the stage of vigorous and progressive savagery, as well as races in the stage of high industrial civilization, are *ipso facto* apt to be individually much more selfish than races which are either degenerating or kept at a fixed point of development by their environment. This is the explanation of that superiority of savage conduct at certain points to Christian conduct, so often insisted on by Mr. Spencer as against Mr. Lang's school in morals and religion. Savages like some of the Esquimaux, so placed as to be almost necessarily communistic if they are to live at all, and absolutely unable to live the life of self-seeking and individualistic accumulation which arises under more propitious conditions, are found to exhibit a high degree of mutuality in their every-day life. The same law is seen in the altruistic and other ethical phases of the life of many primitive peoples—*e.g.*, the Eastern Esquimaux, among whom, on the other hand, feeble old

people are invited to consent to being put to death, and the sociable and truthful Khonds, who had a ritual of annual theanthropic sacrifice.

The same law explains the domestic unselfishness of the Australians. Whatever we decide as to the degree or the direction of the civilization from which they have degenerated, they were clearly degenerating, or stagnating, when discovered by the whites. Possessing "neither metals, bows, pottery, agriculture, nor fixed habitations,"* they were in an incurably precarious relation to their environment, and had no means of securing the first condition of advance, fixity or increase of subsistence. Of tribes so placed, only those practising community of subsistence could survive ; and for them the ethic of unselfishness was as "normal" a development as any other in the moral history of mankind. Individuals and even families practising an individualistic life would run much the greater risks of extinction ; and in all probability many such types have been extinguished. That the older men should religiously inculcate the tribal rule on the younger, and this particularly when in contact with white civilization, is transparently intelligible. The existence of the older men increasingly depends on the unselfishness of the younger ; and it is the ugly fact that for the younger men at this moment the shortest way to a higher state of comfort and material civilization, albeit with an ethical standard at some points lower, would be an abandonment of their grey barbarian kindred, and a resort to the competitive and accumulative industrial or commercial life of the white man. Where Mr. Lang sees supernormal ethics and a marvellous invocation of divine sanctions supernormally ascertained, dispassionate science sees a pathetic play of the normal

* *The Making of Religion*, p. 189.

instinct of self- and race-preservation under the pitiless regimen of natural law. And the perfect normality of it all may perhaps be brought home more clearly to the student when we recall the fact, ignored by Mr. Lang, that these unselfish aborigines will readily enough way-lay and murder a stray white or a black or blacks of another tribe.* Mr. Lang gravely remarks that he "need not say that selflessness is the very essence of goodness, and the central moral doctrine of Christianity." The latter part of the proposition is inaccurate. The central moral doctrine of Christianity is that only the Divine blood sacrifice can atone for human sin; and Christianity assumes and inculcates an eager desire for such salvation. But the reflection brings out very well the peculiar nugatoriness of "supernormal" ethics everywhere as a machinery to transcend natural bias. The Divine Being, in Mr. Lang's theory, taught the Australian blacks to be unselfish, but did not suggest to them the expediency of agriculture, and did not supply them with the tame or tamable animals which have enabled white men to build up civilization where the unaided blacks failed. The Divine Being, in short, revealed to the blacks exactly what they found out for themselves, no more, and no less. The ethical guidance, and the ethical sanction, stop short exactly where a higher level of intelligence would innovate, noting that domestic unselfishness was for the blacks only the necessary minimum of ethics, and that goodwill towards those outside the tribe is necessary to realize selflessness,

* One very curious item in the ethics of some of the Australian blacks is the procedure of the father who, when his child has hurt itself, will beat his innocent neighbours by way of distributing the pain among them. See this slightly discussed in Dr. Westermarck's paper on "The Essence of Revenge," in *Mind*, July, 1898.

to say nothing of its being a possible aid to the betterment of the tribe's lot, if the tribe could only see it. No less normal than all this is the civilized code of Mr. Lang, who, talking throughout his book of "Our Lord," and thus implying that he stands by the alleged ethic of "selflessness," is yet as absolutely hostile to any movement in the direction of communism for competitive Christendom as he is to the propaganda of peace among professedly Christian nations. Without any resort to "the supernormal," we can very well account for the procedure and the doctrine of Mr. Lang: why then should we resort to it in order to explain the Australians?

III.

The most extravagant part of Mr. Lang's thesis, with the exception perhaps of his astonishing assertion that modern science verifies the Gospel miracles—an assertion which calls for a separate criticism—is his unhesitating assumption that, whereas the ordinary evolutionary view of religious origins does not, as he thinks, square with the sort of facts above discussed, his theory of supernormal knowledge among the lowest savages does square at once with the special facts and with the evolution theory. "Nothing," he says,* "excites my own suspicion of my provisional hypothesis more than its symmetry. It really seems to me to fit the facts, as they appear to me, too neatly." Mr. Lang seems to me to labour under a groundless apprehension. The apparent prodigy of neatness which arouses his misgivings is obtained, I think, by leaving out of account the majority of the facts that require to be taken into account, and in particular by ignoring nine-tenths of

* P. 330.

the implications of the law of evolution, which he professes to accept. His theory, in his own words,* "exhibits religion as probably *beginning* in a kind of theism, which is then superseded in some degree, or even corrupted, by Animism in all its varieties. Finally, the exclusive theism of Israel receives its complement in a purified Animism, and emerges as Christianity." This view Mr. Lang claims to differentiate from the "old degeneration theory," inasmuch as his hypothesis, he says,† "makes no assumptions at all." But this claim turns out to mean only that Mr. Lang thinks that the statements he makes express the observed facts, and that his hypothesis is a fair inference from them. Now, we have seen that his main statements either distort the facts or draw from them a quite unwarrantable conclusion; and the final proposition that religion *begins* in a kind of theism is obviously as much of an assumption as was made by the old degeneration theory —is indeed an assumption of the same nature. It is formally reached, and illogically at that, by way of other assumptions. Mr. Lang expressly argues,‡ that *if* a tribe set out with a relatively high and ethical monotheism, and then, *later*, developed ancestor-worship with its propitiatory sacrifices and ceremonies, ancestor-worship, as the newest evolved and infinitely the most practical form of cult, would gradually "thrust the higher belief into the shade." "The ghost-cult would inevitably crowd out the God-cult." We need say nothing here of the family trait of nugatoriness about the supernormal cult, which seems to be always contrived to fail in practice—

> "As if religion were intended
> For nothing else but to be mended."

The immediate issue is the hardihood of Mr. Lang's

* P. 334. † P. 278. ‡ P. 224.

assumption. His argument is that the ancestral spirit can be "squared" in the family interest, while "the equal Father of all men can*not* be 'squared,' and declines (till corrupted by the bad example of ancestral ghosts) to make himself useful to one man rather than to another." If Mr. Lang were to bottom this argument on a thesis that the horde or tribe, with tribal Gods, must have preceded the family with its ancestral or family God, it would have a symmetry in no way sinister. The only difficulties about it would be (1) that of demonstrating that there were hordes and horde-Gods before the family and the ghost-cult existed; and (2) that even the horde-God or tribal God at the best represents a merely tribal and often fallacious ethic—a circumstance rather fatal to Mr. Lang's vocabulary of characterization—while in its most primitive stages it would on this view have all the characteristics of the semi-human animal. But it is of course arguable that the tribal God preceded the family-God. Only, it does not in the least follow either that the family-God or ghost-cult when evolved must drive out the other, or that the other to begin with was not reached by way of the ghost-idea. On the contrary, the most plausible and economical scientific hypothesis would be that the early horde believed in many ghost-spirits; that it specialized one or more as tribal God or Gods; and that the family-God was simply a specialization for family purposes of the same process. The "squaring" of the family-God, again, would simply be a variant of previous "squaring" of the tribe-God, who was *not* the "equal Father of all men," since he was special to the tribe, and who *must* have been held "squarable" by the more cunning in the primitive period, just as he was and is in civilized periods. To this day the Christian who is prevented going by the train which gets smashed regards the episode as a "special Providence"; and a

thousand phenomena of current religion, among the higher and the lower races alike, imply that individual acts are held to win special favour from the "equal Father." It is extremely arbitrary to assume that the same instincts did not operate among primeval savages.

Mr. Lang unduly ignores the phenomena of current religion—when he is not unduly assuming its truth. Nothing can be more inconsistent with observed facts than his proposition,* that "if the idea of a universal Father and Maker came last in evolution as a refinement, then of course it ought to be the newest, and *therefore the most fashionable and potent*" of the cults of the given society. The last is certainly the newest, without any "ought"; but the rest of the "ought" is simply preposterous. Does Mr. Lang really find that the new idea invariably, or often—or indeed ever—becomes at once more potent than the old? Does he, on this score, expect his new theory to supersede all others? It is hard to guess what he is thinking of; and it must suffice to point out that whereas for modern Christendom, as a whole, Unitarianism or simple Theism is certainly the later evolved doctrine, coming "as a refinement," it was not at its first propagation and is not now "the most fashionable and potent" cult; that, on the contrary, it is at this moment less fashionable and socially less potent than the cult which purposely goes back to the far more primitive thought and practice of the early Church.

The logical synthesis of all the phenomena seems to be just this: (1) that a tribal cult which inculcates tribal fraternity *may* conceivably precede a set of family cults which check tribal fraternity, just as the tribal cult checks inter-tribal or racial fraternity; (2) that the rise of family cults (if thus secondary) is to be understood as resulting

* P. 224.

from changed conditions which favour family development and partial tribal disintegration ; (3) that the tribal cult may all the while, and usually does, co-exist with the family cults ; (4) that a really high or consistent ethic is not predicable of either species of cult ; (5) that the development of a comparatively consistent monotheism *is* usually, if not always, an intellectual refinement* reached in a more civilized stage ; and (6) that variations in standards of conduct are the outcome, as regards both savage and civilized societies, of the external conditions and the culture conditions—the latter being, in the terms of the case, more and not less important in the civilized state. On Mr. Lang's view—that it is a supernormal perception that gives the savage his communistic ethic, and that this teaching all the same gets fatally "corrupted," save among the very lowest grades of savage, by Animism, and even by Christian Animism—it is hard to see how the religionist can get comfort any more than he gets logic. The supposed lift given by the supernormal knowledge is doomed after a little while to come to nothing, until after ages there comes for some peoples another lift, which in turn is frustrated ; and finally there is no fresh lift at all ; for Mr. Lang, as it happens, sees no prospect of any fresh ethical development, and does not even believe in the carefully-watched performances of Mrs. Piper, though he is disposed to be severe on anybody who will not believe his favourite stories of the second-sight of savages. Is it not just as comforting, besides being so much more scientific, to recognize that the savage's ethic is just the expression of his ethical needs as perceptible by his intelligence ; and that the ethical

* In the case of the Hebrews, a policy of sacerdotal centralization may have been the proximate causal force, but there is good reason to infer a stimulus from foreign monotheistic or "henotheistic" thought.

fall that in some respects and for a time comes of some forms of social progress, is also the outcome of the special conditions which a fuller knowledge may enable us to modify?

IV.

However that may be, it becomes painfully clear that the sinister symmetry of Mr. Lang's theory consists in its standing, as it were, upon one leg. Whatever comfort it may yield him, or anyone else, it will *not* square with the evolution theory. That theory requires the hypothesis that the human species was developed during a necessarily vast space of time, from a lower species, and that again from a still lower species, and so on till the mind has regressed to the first forms of life. The theory may or may not be true; but that is what it means, as regards human life. Now, Mr. Lang's theory of a *beginning* of religion through supernormal faculty in savages is a mere upsetting of the evolution principle. How was the assumed supernormal power evolved? Is it to be conceived as a sudden and quasi-supernatural attainment? If so, what becomes of evolution? If not, how can a "beginning" be set in what is *ex hypothesi* a late stage of savage evolution—late, that is, from the point of view of the growth of the species? Mr. Lang, in effect, attributes to savages higher supernormal powers than those of the civilized world; is he not then bound to surmise still higher supernormal powers among the earlier semi-human species, and powers higher still among the pre-human species? Such notions do in some degree prevail among savages themselves, and even among semi-civilized peoples—witness some of the Welsh legends in the Mabinogion. Either the supernormal insight founded on was *gradually evolved*—in which case its earlier forms

would be relatively crude, and the "beginning" of religion would be thrown back to them—or it was suddenly attained, yet attained only to be stultified, on Mr. Lang's theory, by the corrupting tendencies of the stupider but later-evolved Animism. On the latter view, there were long ages in which primeval man, albeit distinctly human and living in society, had *no religion whatever*, neither Animism nor the supernormally attained insight into the existence of an ethical Father. That is, man lived for ages in very much such savagery as we find still subsisting, yet without some of the main psychological attributes of the known savage—realizing exactly the proposition that Mr. Lang and Dr. Max Müller agree in repelling, as against Mr. Spencer and Sir John Lubbock. Mr. Lang and Dr. Müller insist that no savages known to us are really known to be religionless. Yet Mr. Lang's dazzlingly "symmetrical" theory commits him logically to just such a conception as regards immense periods of savage evolution. The "pre-supernormal" savage, as we are fain to call him, must be presumed to have had dreams, since even dogs seem to have dreams; but from his dreams he developed no ghost-idea. And it was on this cultless, superstitionless, mythless, guessless savage that there came all of a sudden—so Mr. Lang's theory implies—either a supernormal power full grown, yielding him at once a cosmical, an ethical, and a physical second-sight, or a power of the first two kinds supervening on a physical second-sight which had been possessed by the race for an indefinite period without giving rise to any sort of religious idea. It is only the phenomenon of a bulky and painstaking treatise from Mr. Lang that can bring home to an evolutionist the possibility of such an extravagance being put forth in the name of the evolution theory by a competent thinker.

It will be of no avail to argue on Mr. Lang's side, as

some disputants might, that various faculties appear at various stages of human evolution—that the faculty of writing, for instance, only *begins*, practically speaking, when writing has been invented, and that its invention may be conceived as a play of supernormal faculty. Granting that in all concrete advances of power and knowledge there is a certain untraceable element, a new phase of energy, every such advance is none the less the outcome of combinations of previous processes, and must be so conceived by evolutionists. Before there was writing there were signs, gestural and graphic, and it is inconceivable that in a society without any idea of significant gestures or marks there should be suddenly produced a superior system of writing. If a savage of genius so placed *could* invent such a thing, his comrades could not receive it. The case is roughly the same with religion. Even Mr. Lang does not suppose that supernormal faculty is, so to speak, normal among savages. He regards it as a rare specialty. Then, supposing it so to exist, its sudden revelations could not conceivably set up a universal belief among normal people who, in the terms of the case, had no sort of religious standing-ground whatever. Getting savages in tropical plains to believe in the unseen phenomena of the freezing-over of lakes and rivers would be a trifle compared with the inculcation of a belief in an ethical God upon a world of savages who had no sort of God-idea to proceed upon. Given, however, the indispensable standing-ground, we have already the "beginning" of religion, or rather an already ancient form of religious belief on which another religion may be superinduced And that ancient form itself will have to be accounted for in terms of evolution.

To this position, as it happens, Mr. Lang is himself finally forced in terms of his own doctrine as to mythology. The great scientific flaw of his earlier treatise

was its arbitrary separation of mythology from religion; and that flaw is now made logically ruinous by his attempt to present primitive religion without mythology. In his present work he repeatedly alludes to "that strangely neglected chapter, that essential chapter, the Higher beliefs of the Lowest savages,"* blaming the anthropologists for the neglect in question. If anyone is thus blamable, it is surely the mythological anthropologist who deliberately excluded "religion" from his purview in a work entitled "Myth, Ritual, *and Religion.*" In the end, of course, these unscientific separations bring their logical punishment. In Mr. Lang's case, it is the destruction of his own theory at his own hands. After declaring as mythologist that any connection between mythology and higher religion is merely accidental,† he is obliged as a religionist to describe mythology as "the worst side of religion."‡ And in the very act of arguing that what he calls the better side of religion is prior to what he virtually represents as *another* "worse side of religion"—to wit, Animism—he is obliged to make the fatal admission, concerning his religion and his mythology,§ that "both elements are found co-existing in almost all races, and nobody, in our total lack of historical information about the beginnings, can say which, if either, element is the earlier, or which, if either, is derived from the other." Well, if nobody can say it, Mr. Lang has achieved the impossible. For it is Mr. Lang who has very plainly told us that the ancient Greek myths were retained by worshippers whose religion had developed beyond the myth stage, but who were afraid of "changing the luck."‖ There is no question here of "Christian Animism" or

* P. 183.

† *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (1st ed.), ii., 129.

‡ *The Making of Religion*, p. 199.

§ *Id.* ‖ *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, ii., 165.

Judaism having arisen and been lapsed from. Thus stands the case, then: Mr. Lang argues that Animism is not earlier, but later, than superior ethical monotheism. Yet he is driven to admit that mythology in general, which implies God-ideas, seems at least as old as his superior monotheism; and in his earlier treatise he had virtually argued that it is much older. And so, in fact, he must finally regard it, unless he is to maintain in so many words that the supernormally-attained monotheism of the pure and pristine savage was not only corrupted by Animism, but corrupted into the mass of mostly absurd and indecent anecdotes of which he has declared mythology to consist, and this *because* it comes from the pristine savage. And even if he took up that position, which would seem to be a sort of Waterloo for the supernormalists, he would still have to explain the previous rise to monotheism from the animal stage, as well as the lapse from monotheism to mythology, in terms of the evolution principle.

Mr. Lang's new theory, then, is simply a process of self-contradiction—demonstrably so whatever view we may take of any of his subsidiary propositions. I have not encumbered this inquiry with a discussion of the gratuitous verbal difficulty he has raised by arguing that certain savages do not regard their Gods, or some of their Gods, as "spirits"—a proposition which might be maintained as to Christians on similar grounds. Nor have I here followed any of the numerous cross-scents so vivaciously set up by Mr. Lang in his manifold animadversions on science and men of science, the credibility of the Pentateuch and the Gospels, the credulity of unbelievers, and the dogmatism of sceptics, though these too are worth following once in a way. I do not even raise in this connection the issue of the credibility of the scandalously ill-certified stories of savage second-sight which Mr. Lang scatters through

his pages. But one may without irrelevance suggest, in a general way, that a critic who without apparent misgiving tells us of a crystal-gazer who "sees" in the glass ball a lady "about forty, but *looking* thirty-five,"* had need consider whether his own psychological processes do not require checking.

APPENDIX.

Mr. Lang's Theory of Religious Origins.

In the *Fortnightly Review* for November, 1898, in reply to the foregoing article by me, criticising his work *The Making of Religion*, Mr. Andrew Lang makes the assertion that in certain passages I have ascribed to him a theory he does not hold. The essential passages in question are: (1) "The Divine Being, in Mr. Lang's theory, taught the Australian blacks to be unselfish"; (2) "On Mr. Lang's view, it is the supernormal perception that gives the savage his communistic ethic"; (3) "Savages [in Mr. Lang's opinion] probably got their God-idea by way of their supernormal perceptions"; (4) "Mr. Lang's theory of a *beginning* of religion through supernormal faculty is a mere upsetting of the evolution principle."

On these statements, Mr. Lang writes that they are "baseless inventions" of mine, and that I give no reference to his

* *The Making of Religion*, p. 105.

book "for any one of them, because there is no reference to give." In another passage, referring to one of my comments, he writes: "I do not know where Mr. Robertson got his knowledge of my private attitude towards 'the propaganda of peace,'" thus implying that I had not been proceeding, in that connection, on his published writings. There is little else in Mr. Lang's article that needs answering; but such charges as the above seem to call for notice.

Mr. Lang's main defensive position is:—"How the God-idea arose I do not pretend to know—*I disclaim any theory*;" and he gives six references. Without comment on his other expressions, I append some score of the passages on which I proceeded, explaining first that the reason for their not being cited in my article was just their frequency, and my belief that the theory I read in them was further implied in the whole colligation of the book, in relation to its title. The reader is requested to note the cumulative effect:—

"It is important, then, to trace, if possible, *the origin* of these two beliefs"—*i.e.*, "faith in God and in the Immortality of the Soul" (p. 51).

"We *can only theorise* and make more or less plausible conjectures as to the *first rudiments* of human *faith in God*....." (p. 53).

"We are obliged to guess, in considerable ignorance of the actual conditions, and this historical ignorance inevitably besets all anthropological speculation about the origin of religion" (p. 64).

"We cannot be certain, *a priori*, that the *earliest* man knew no more of supernormal or apparently supernormal experiences than we commonly do, or that these did not influence his thoughts *on religion*" (p. 65).

"I may seem to have *outrun already the limits of permissible hypothesis*. It may appear absurd to surmise that there can exist in man, savage or civilized, a faculty for acquiring *information not accessible by the known channels of sense*.....But one may be permitted to quote the opinion of M. Charles Richet" as to such abnormal powers. "Instances tending to raise a presumption in favour of M. Richet's idea may now be sought in savage and civilized life" (p. 71).

"If it is [*i.e.*, if supernormal knowledge be attainable], we must obviously increase our list of the savage's reasons for believing in a soul: we must make his reasons include 'psychical' experiences; and there must be an X region to investigate" (p. 69).

"We have tried to show that the belief in *human souls* may be, in part at least, based on supernormal phenomena which Materialism disregards" (p. 160).

"Has *fetishism* one of its origins in the actual field of supernormal experience in the X region? This question *we do not propose to answer*, as the evidence, though practically universal, may be said to rest on imposture and illusion. But we can at least give a sketch of the nature of the evidence" (p. 161).

"No more than any other theory, nay, *less than some other theories*, can it [the prevalent theory of Materialism] account for the *psychical facts* which, at the lowest, we may not honestly leave out of the reckoning. We have *therefore* no more to say about the supernormal aspects of the *origins* of religion" (p. 172).

"We wish.....to show that the [normal plain man's] *idea of God*.....occurs rudely but recognizably in the lowest known grades of savagery, and *therefore* cannot arise from the *later* speculation of men comparatively civilized and advanced, on the original datum of ghosts" (p. 175).

[The truism here can be seriously taken only as pointing to some proposition a little more significant.]

"The savage 'lives in terror of the souls of the dead as harmful spirits.' This might yield a Devil; it *would not* yield a God who 'makes for righteousness'" (p. 177).

"It is as easy, almost, for me to believe that they [the "lowest savages"] 'were not left without a witness' as to believe that this God of theirs was evolved out of the maleficent ghost of a dirty, mischievous medicine-man" (p. 185).

"It is *part of* my theory that the more popular ghost-worship .....invaded the possibly older religion of the Supreme Father" (p. 206).

"Come from what germ he may, Jehovah or Allah *does not* come from a ghost" (p. 208).

[Thus, while frequently asserting that we cannot have historical knowledge as to religious origins, Mr. Lang claims a positive knowledge that a certain supposed process *did not* happen.]

"They [the Andamanese] have not only a PROFOUNDLY PHILOSOPHICAL *religion*, but an excessively absurd *mythology*....." (p. 211).

"Among the Yao, as among the Australian Kurnai, the central secret lesson of religion is the lesson of our Lord" (p. 235).

"By what *curious but uniform freak* of savage logic is he [the high God] regarded as prior to men, and, though a Ghost, prior to death?" (p. 236).

"Clearly this [non-sacrifice to the High God] does not point to the recent but to the remote development of the higher ideas. .....We shall next see how this view, the opposite of the anthropological theory, works when applied to other races" (p. 229).

[It should be explained that by "*the* anthropological theory" Mr. Lang seems to mean, not the theory of evolution, but the particular "ghost theory" of Mr. Spencer, though that is repudiated by a large number of contemporary anthropologists.]

"Least of all can such a God be 'the creation of the priests that minister to him,' when.....this God is ministered to by no priest" (p. 273).

[Again an empty truism, unless the words be taken in some such significant sense as was understood by me.]

"This pedigree cannot indeed be historically traced, but it presents none of the logical difficulties inherent in the animistic pedigree" *(ibid).*

"That in this God 'we have our being' *in so far as somewhat of ours may escape at moments from the bonds of Time and the manacles of Space, the earlier part of this treatise is intended to suggest,* as a thing by no means necessarily beyond a reasonable man's power to conceive" (pp. 292, 293).

"We *know* that Israel had, in an early age, the conception of the moral Eternal; we *know* that at an early age that conception was contaminated" (and later greatly purified). "Why matters went thus in Israel and not elsewhere we *know* not, *except* that such was the will of God in the mysterious education of the world" (p. 295).

[Mr. Lang had just before (p. 289) asserted that the Supreme Being of the lowest savages when first met is "on a higher plane by far than the Gods of Greeks and Semites in their *earliest known* characters." Compare again p. 312; and p. 309 as to the "moral Supreme Being whom Israel *must* have known in extremely remote ages, unless," etc.]

"Whence came the moral element in Jehovah? One may surmise that it was the survival of the primitive *divinely sanctioned* ethics of the ancient savage ancestors of the Israelites.....In the *counsels of eternity, Israel was chosen* to keep burning.....that flame," etc. (p. 315).

"It appears, then, if our general suggestion meets with any acceptance, that *what occurred in the development of Hebrew religion was precisely what the Bible tells us did occur"* (p. 316).

".....Christianity last.....*ended* the long, intricate, and mysterious theological education of humanity. *Such is our theory*, which does not, to us, *appear to lack evidence*, nor to be inconsistent (as the anthropological theory is apparently inconsistent) with the hypothesis of evolution" (p. 329).

"I am perfectly aware that the 'superstitiousness' of the earlier part of this essay [as to supernormal phenomena] must injure any effect which the argument of the latter part might possibly produce on critical opinion. *Yet that argument in no way depends on what we think about the phenomena*—normal, supernormal, or illusory—on which the *theory of ghost, soul, or spirit* may have been based. It exhibits religion as probably *beginning* in a kind of Theism"—*i.e.*, the superior kind before specified (p. 334).

Now, if all these passages do not imply (1) that Mr. Lang advances a theory while professing to disclaim any theory; and (2) that the primordial Theism for which he contends was supernormal in origin—what *do* they mean? What is meant by his challenge as to the alternative of a "curious but uniform freak of savage logic"? When he argues that the

earliest man, whose religion he suggests was pure Theism, *was* influenced in his religion by his supernormal powers, what idea did he mean to convey? When he approximates Hebrew origins to those of the "earliest" man in general, what are we to understand by his proposition that the Hebrew development was precisely as the Bible describes it? Where he says the ethic of the Yao is the ethic of "Our Lord," are we to understand that he uses the latter expression without suggesting anything supernormal? When he says "we can only theorise" about Theistic origins, is it his intention to put no theory; and when he disclaims a theory as to the supernormal factor in Fetishism, is it by way of proving that it is precisely to Fetishism his supernormal data apply? When he writes of the "primitive divinely sanctioned ethics of the ancient savage ancestors of the Israelites," what is his meaning? When he writes about a relation to God "in so far as somewhat of ours may escape at moments from the bonds of Time and the manacles of Space," and refers us back for the argument to the first part of his book, what is he driving at?

Mr. Lang in his reply explicitly declares that he associates the rise not of the God-idea but of Animism with the supernormal. See now to what chaos he reduces his book. The exposition was unsystematic as I read it; but then Mr. Lang is never systematic; and it was useless to chafe on that score. But he is now committed, in terms of his book and of his explanation, to the following set of theories, all the while "disclaiming any theory." (1) The *beginning* of all religion, among the *earliest* men, was an elevated ethical Theism, and nothing more. (2) As the lowest savages seem to have supernormal powers, there is a presumption that the earliest had them, and that they "influenced their thoughts" on religion. (3) But their supernormal powers, all the same, had nothing to do with their ethical Theism. (4) That Theism, in the terms of the case, had not been led up to by any lower forms of religion; all the same, it was attained in a strictly normal (or supernatural?) way. (5) What the supernormal powers did was to aid in the evolution of Animism; though in one part of his book Mr. Lang expressly declined to say so. (6) But the Animism, *ex hypothesi*, came *much later* than the Theism (and, *quaere*, in some tribes has

never arrived at all, despite their supernormal powers?), though (p. 331) "this belief too was *necessary to religion*," as regards the soul-idea. (7) Thus the supernormal powers "influenced" primordial Theistic thought *without any effect;* but served much later to *corrupt* the same thought by encouraging Animism, and at the same time "elevating man's conception of his own nature." For all this we have now chapter and verse.

Again, in "gladly" accepting one "correction" from me, Mr. Lang reduces the original position to simple vacuity. It now stands thus: *If* the higher Theism came last in evolution, and were further "the latest doctrine in *universal* acceptance," "*then*, of course, it *ought* to be the newest, and therefore the most fashionable and potent" sort of religion. Quite so. As for his remark, again, that one of his sentences ought to have warned me against my interpretation, I have only to point out, firstly, that Mr. Lang now misquotes his own book, and, secondly, that the passage has exactly the reverse of the signification he now ascribes to it. He wrote that people might reply to him that if Theism was not attained on the lines of the ghost theory, it might have been reached "in some *equally illogical* way" (pp. 208–9), not "some other *natural* way," as he now puts it in quotation marks. But how could anyone reasonably infer from either expression that Mr. Lang meant to imply that *he* thought the real process had been at all scientifically analogous to that set forth in the theory he discarded?

The argument is now so hopelessly contradictory that I can attach no final purport whatever to Mr. Lang's account of the probable origin of religion. I have to note, however, that he misquotes *me* as having attributed to him a belief in a "supernatural" origin for the God-idea where I wrote "supernormal" (*Fortnightly*, p. 732); and, further, that in his book he actually professes "scientific nescience" as against "the cocksureness of popular science" when he is reiterating just such current propositions about the "counsels of eternity" as Mr. Arnold used to deride. His way of "disclaiming any theory" thus fails to convey any normal meaning. Let the interested reader compare the pages to which he refers with my citations, and judge between us. In some of them I find no relevant passage whatever. In one (p. 208)

occurs a relevant sentence which I have cited above, also this :—"Our conception of God descends *not* from ghosts *but* from the Supreme Beings of non-ancestor-worshipping peoples"—a proposition which may in Mr. Lang's opinion stand for "scientific nescience," but which is really a definite claim of knowledge up to a certain point, as is the proposition on page 273 about the "primitive undifferentiated.....Being of such creeds as the Australian." On page 293 Mr. Lang does say that we "possess no *positive evidence*" as to how a higher God-idea was reached ; but these very words, in their context, have the distinct force of suggesting a theory that only needs positive evidence to make it a demonstration. On page 321 of his book he expressly says : "Our existing evidence will hardly support *any* theory of religion." Then the theory as to Animism, to which he now says he *does* stand, is no more a "theory," in terms of the rest of his argument, than that deduced by me from his whole book. Finally, when speaking (p. 331) of "the belief, how attained we *know* not," in an ethical Omnipotence, Mr. Lang adds the footnote : "The hypothesis of St. Paul seems not the most unsatisfactory"; so that once more his "we know not" has merely its literal force, and rather suggests than denies that he offers a "theory." So, too, his reiteration, in reply to me, that nobody knows *historically* what came first, is wholly beside the case, for he ends by avowing the *theory* that the God-idea came before Animism, and was blended with Animism later. It was his ostensible *theory* that I was discussing ; and my general contention that it is incompatible with the evolution theory will be found to apply to his final position, so far as that is intelligible.

It remains to meet Mr. Lang's insinuation that I made a guess at his "private attitude" on peace propaganda and social ethics. I have only to refer the candid reader to some half-a-dozen of his public utterances—*e.g.*, the poems in the section "Deeds of Men" in his *Grass of Parnassus ;* certain passages in his *Life of Sir Stafford Northcote* (ed. 1891, p. 347) ; and in particular an extremely explicit passage in his *Letters to Dead Authors*, deriding the Arbitration Society (ed. 1886, p. 72). On the device of charging me with touching on his "private attitude" in the face of such published deliverances as these, I say nothing, beyond pointing out

that it may throw some light on the other reply above dealt with.

It may be well that in conclusion I should meet Mr. Lang's last disclaimer: "I do not know where I have said that 'modern science verifies the Gospel miracles.'" Mr. Lang's words in his book were :—"Our contempt for the Gospels as 'myths' must slowly die, as 'miracle' after 'miracle' is brought within the realm of acknowledged law" (p. 25). The Gospel miracles oftenest spoken of as myths are the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection and Ascension. As Mr. Lang apparently means to suggest that these narratives are made more credible by the discoveries of modern science, he goes even further, it seems to me, than my words broadly represented him as going. But the issue as to miracles is separately dealt with in the next essay.

MR. LANG ON MIRACLES.

In a recent discussion* over his work entitled *The Making of Religion*, Mr. Andrew Lang wrote that he was not aware of having ever said that "modern science verifies the Gospel miracles." Those of his words from which that view was deduced were the following, among others :—

"As the class of facts [alleged miracles] which Hume declined to examine begins to be gradually admitted by science, the thing becomes clear. The evidence which could safely convey those now admittedly possible facts, say from the time of Christ, is so far proved to be not necessarily mythical.....Thus considered, the kinds of marvellous events recorded in the Gospels, for example, are no longer to be dismissed on *à priori* grounds as 'mythical.'.....Our notions of the possible cease to be a criterion of truth or falsehood, and our contempt for the Gospels as myths must slowly die as 'miracle' after 'miracle' is brought within the realms of acknowledged law."†

Without spending time in speculating as to what Mr. Lang would admit to be a correct summary of this passage, I shall proceed to deal with it in its original simplicity. And first as to Hume, whose words Mr. Lang has garbled, misrepresented, and misunderstood to a degree that I shall leave to the reader to characterize.

I.

Writing of the once famous "miracles" related by the Jansenists as having happened at the tomb of the

* *Fortnightly Review*, Nov., 1898 (see also the close of the preceding paper). † *The Making of Religion*, p. 25.

Abbé Paris between 1727 and 1733 (not merely in 1731, as Mr. Lang implies), Hume observes* that many of them were proved in the bishop's court under the eye of Cardinal Noailles; that "his successor in the archbishopric was an enemy to the Jansenists"; and that twenty-two *curés* of Paris pressed that successor to examine those miracles, "which *they* assert to be known to the whole world, and indisputably certain: But he wisely forebore." On which Mr. Lang comments†: "Thus it is wisdom, according to Hume, to dismiss the most public and well-attested 'miracles' without examination. This is experimental science of an odd kind." The phrase "well-attested" has here reference to other remarks by Hume, with which I shall deal below. It is necessary first to expose Mr. Lang's distressing blunder. The words "But he wisely forebore" would surely be understood by any open-minded person, and would once have been understood by Mr. Lang, to express Hume's opinion that the archbishop did well *for his own sake* to let the subject drop. But where Mr. Lang plays coryphæus to the dunces, it may be well to explain. If the archbishop had undertaken the investigation, he would presumably have come to one of two conclusions. Either the alleged miracles (or some of them) had happened or they had not. If, after the Archbishop of Sens had written his Pastoral Letters discrediting them, the Archbishop of Paris should decide that they *had* happened, he would thereby be exasperating his own side and crowning with religious glory the cause of the enemy, the Jansenists. (Presumably the twenty-two *curés* were Jansenists: Mr. Lang in his quotation suppresses the words implying this; but that is a trifle compared with the rest.) If, on the other hand, the archbishop decided that the miracles had *not*

* Note L to essay *Of Miracles*. † Work cited, p. 20.

happened, he would not only discredit the procedure of his official predecessor and reopen the whole disturbance, but thrust afresh upon unbelievers an extremely damaging argument against the *Gospel* miracles* and the whole multitude of Catholic prodigies, inasmuch as he would be pronouncing worthless the testimony of a large number of respectable Christians who certificated miracles in his own day. The reader will now see the point of Hume's sarcasm. It is left to Mr. Lang to meet that sarcasm in the manner of the witless. He tells us that at the outset of the Essay on Miracles "Hume amusingly displays the self-complacency and the want of humour with which we Scots are commonly charged by our critics." On Knox's principle, I in turn will take leave to say for North Britain, as "a subject born within the same," that the person who has given us away in this matter is not Hume, but Mr. Lang; not St. David, but the other. And I cannot sincerely profess to find the fiasco very amusing. Again and again does Mr. Lang repeat his lamentable attack on Hume as an objector to scientific investigation. In one place† he does not scruple to say that Hume "decided that investigation *ought never to be attempted*." When the humourist has lost his humour, wherewith shall he be enlightened?

II.

So much for one bad blunder; but worse remains. In referring to the Jansenist miracles, Hume speaks of them as cases of "the curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind." On the next page after that on which he cites those words, and in direct

* As it was, this difficulty actually arose, and was dealt with on the orthodox side in several treatises.

† Work cited, p. 17.

reference to them, Mr. Lang writes: "*The phenomena* were cases of healing, many of them surprising, *of cataleptic rigidity, and of insensibility to pain*, among visitors to the tomb of the Abbé Paris (1731)." Such are the methods by which the new creed of miracle is to be built up. Hume, observe, had said nothing whatever of mere cataleptic rigidity and insensibility to pain. He was not thinking of such things; neither was anyone else in his day, broadly speaking, when the Paris "miracles" were discussed as marvels. He wrote of sickness, deafness, and blindness; and any candid disputant would take him to be thinking, as he was, of *such sickness, deafness, and blindness as medical men were confessedly unable to cure*, and as were not known ever to have passed away in ordinary course, without any medical treatment. That was implied in the definition of the term miracle; and cures of the hopelessly blind and of the born-deaf-and-dumb had actually been alleged. Now, although Hume may, like other wise men, have miscalculated the possibilities of faith-healing, he was here on safe enough ground; because, as it happens, the alleged cures of deafness and blindness *were proved to be impostures, and were afterwards tacitly given up by the Jansenists.** Of all this Mr. Lang says nothing. He seems to have taken no trouble to ascertain the facts beyond glancing at the cases founded on by the hysterical Jansenist Montgeron. I have not read through Montgeron's heavy quarto, and I do not think Mr. Lang has; but I find it is accurately described as putting eight cases of miraculous cure, which were briefly as follows: (1) Cure of inflammation of one eye in a young man who had lost the other; (2) cure of a

* A condensed narrative will be found in a book once admired by believers in the Gospel miracles, *The Criterion*, by Bishop Douglas, ed. 1832, pp. 69-83, 109-114, 129-138; also in Leland's *View of the Deistical Writers*, Letter xix.

woman whose doctor said she had a sort of rheumatic gout, with bad pains in the arms; (3) cure of a woman long ill with pains in the side, head, and stomach, result of a fall at a critical time; (4, 5, and 6) cures of two women and a man described as quasi-paralytic; (7) cure of Louise Coirin, diagnosed as having a tumour or cancer of the left breast, of which "the nipple fell off"; (8) cure of the sight of a man's eye which had been pierced with an awl. A ninth case was mentioned without any stress being laid on it.

Now, not one of these cases comes under Hume's two heads of deafness and blindness; nor is it at all likely that he would have spoken in the same terms of such cases as these. But as a matter of fact, of the six cases "proved" in 1728 before the commissary of Cardinal de Noailles, two were disposed of on further inquiry. Concerning one, that of Jacques Laurent Menedrieux, I have seen no details save the general statement reproduced by Bishop Douglas. Concerning the other, Jean Nivet, eleven witnesses had sworn that he had been cured of lameness and blindness (Nivet himself had not been produced!). In 1732 he was found to be lame and blind still. The twenty-two *curés*, accordingly, asked for the proclamation of only *four* of the cures, discreetly ignoring the others. Hume had overlooked this detail; and generally he errs, perhaps maliciously, in minimizing the Jesuits' case against the miracles—errors which Mr. Lang fails to note; but this in no way affects the force of his implicit argument against the miracles of the Gospel, which were historically on a similar footing, being either denied or ascribed to devils by the Jews. Mr. Lang's handling of the subject, on the contrary, garbles Hume's case to such an extent as to put it in an absolutely false light. The total effect of his exposition, read in connection with the passage first above cited from his book, is to suggest to the reader that Hume

sought to burke certain miraculous phenomena which probably were genuine, and which accordingly helped to accredit the miracles of the Gospel.

Before we deal with this implication on its merits, it will be well to collate the essential facts. On the one hand, the cases of Montgeron were in no way commensurate with the main Gospel miracles. The young man with the inflamed eye had been previously relieved by a medicament, and was actually treating it with a lotion given him by his doctor at the time of the "miracle"; and according to certificates produced by the Archbishop of Sens, the malady returned. The paralytics, some of whose cures had been very slow, were amenable to medical treatment. The cases of rheumatic gout and of complicated pains were also maladies of a sort that in ordinary experience often pass away. Even the pierced eye comes under the same description. The only problematic case is that of Louise Coirin—one out of all the dozens of cases originally alleged. For, be it remembered, the Archbishop of Sens had dealt with twenty-two cases, and of these Montgeron sought to sustain only five, adding a few others. Those of the miracles which were really on all fours with some of the principal prodigies of the Gospels, cures of the lame and the born blind, were on investigation proved to the satisfaction of the anti-Jansenists to be gross frauds; and were in Hume's day held to have been so proved by such Protestant writers as Douglas and Leland. The very fact that Montgeron's list had been so narrowed is one of the most important data in the case; but from Mr. Lang's account the reader could never have known it. He says of the whole body of the miracles: "*Had* the cases been judicially examined (all medical evidence was in their favour), and had they been proved false, the cause of Hume would have profited enormously. A strong presumption would have been raised against the

miracles of Christianity." Thus can history be written by a professed corrector of the errors of men of science. All the most serious cases *were* judicially examined, despite the attitude of the Archbishop, and were "proved" false; and the Christian advocates undertook as confidently as ever to show that the principal Gospel miracles were unattainted. Bishop Douglas decided that the Paris cures, where genuine and not due to the ordinary course of nature, were due to "the power of impressions made on the mind,"* and insisted that Christ's chief miracles were of an entirely different order. In France, Des Vœux took a similar line. Mr. Lang has recklessly multiplied error where he pretends to be removing it.

Even of Montgeron's cases it is false to say that "all medical evidence was in their favour." In the case of Margaret Thibault, whose improvement had been very gradual, it was certified by the physician of the Duke of Orleans that after the "cure" she remained unable to move two of her fingers;† and, as already mentioned, the man with the inflamed eye was not really cured.‡ The case of the man whose eye had been pierced with an awl (and whose "cure" occurred in Languedoc in 1733, two years after the closing of the tomb of the Abbé at Paris) is nothing to the purpose, since such an accident might be got the better of in ordinary course, as many contended. According to the Archbishop of Sens, further, the man's own uncle testified that he had been able to see with the damaged eye within a few weeks after the accident, and fifteen months before the time of the alleged miracle; and the man himself later

* *Criterion*, pp. 93, 101, 102, 105, 107, 122, 152, etc.

† Certif. given by Montgeron, and cited by Douglas, p. 111. Cp. pp. 88, 109.

‡ *Id.*, p. 112.

signed a confession to that effect!* And as regards the cures of local pains, including even the tumour, it was part of the medical theory and experience even of that time that such troubles could be cured by mental influences.† The idea is as old as Hippocrates, and was probably quite familiar to Hume. Even according to Montgeron, Louise Coirin's cure took two months. Such were the particular Jansenist prodigies which, with scandalous carelessness, Mr. Lang represents to be *the* cases alluded to by Hume,‡ and describes as having "all the medical evidence in their favour."

III.

How then does the case now stand with regard to *(a)* the Gospel miracles, and *(b)* Hume's general argument? Christian writers, as we have seen, took pains in the days of Montgeron and of Hume to show that neither the false miracles nor the real cures at the tomb of the Abbé de Paris did anything to invalidate the miracles of the New Testament. Mr. Lang appears to suppose that he is broaching new ideas when he is merely putting carelessly propositions which serious Christians laboured over long before he was born, and which hundreds of Rationalists of his own day have studied and dismissed as untenable. His methods of argument are very much worse than theirs. Bishop Douglas argued that the main miracles of Christ were

* Douglas, p. 87.

† See the testimonies cited by Douglas, pp. 95-100.

‡ In his concluding chapter (p. 326), after a dozen other things to similar effect, Mr. Lang asserts in so many words that Hume "would have declined to investigate, because they were 'miraculous,' certain occurrences which, to Charcot, were ordinary incidents in medical experience." It is a double misstatement of the facts.

such as could not be wrought save by supernatural means, and that none of the Jansenist cures were of that order. Mr. Lang accepts Montgeron's cases in the lump, falsely identifies them with those mentioned by Hume, correlates them with modern cases of cure by hypnotism or auto-suggestion,* and finally pretends that such cases disentitle us to regard as myths "the kinds of marvellous events recorded in the Gospels." Scientific men and philosophers do go astray ; but not often, surely, can they have reasoned so preposterously as this.

The Gospel miracles may be thus briefly classified :—

1. Single and peculiar prodigies :—*(a)* the Virgin Birth ; *(b)* the Resurrection ; *(c)* the Ascension ; *(d)* the walking on the waves ; *(e)* quieting the storm ; *(f)* the feeding of the five thousand ; *(g)* the rising of the "saints" from their graves at the crucifixion.

2. Specific miracles of instantaneous cure or revival : —*(a)* the raising of Lazarus and the Widow's son of Naïn ; *(b)* the instantaneous cure of lepers ; *(c)* the instantaneous cure of the blind, the cripple, the deaf, the dumb, and the "possessed," presumably epileptics ; *(d)* the instantaneous cure of the long-standing "issue of blood."

3. Wholesale curing of "all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases."

Towards which of these three classes of prodigy, then, is our attitude to be changed by reason of any discoveries or admissions of modern science ? Even Mr. Lang, I suppose, will hardly rest his case on the third class. In what degree then is any one specific Gospel miracle made more credible by the case of Louise Coirin or any other of Montgeron's cases, or any of Dr. Charcot's or Mr. Lang's ? Which of all the specified

* *The Making of Religion*, p. 24.

"miracles" is in any degree "brought within the realm of acknowledged law"? Positively, not one; not even the case of the woman with the issue of blood, cured instantaneously by faith. The modern case with which Mr. Lang parallels it (pp. 23–24) is that of a redskin who had paralysis of one side, who was conjured over or hypnotized for three days, who was then able to move the paralyzed fingers and toes, and after six months could go a-hunting! That is Mr. Lang's "*mere coincidence with the dicta of our Lord*, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.'.....I have not found such faith, no, not in Israel"! This when there had been no exhibition whatever of special faith! On the strength of this narrative, or of others such as this, forsooth, we are to begin to abandon our belief that the Gospel miracles are mythical. Mr. Lang, I suppose, is now within sight of belief in the Virgin Birth and the Ascension.

IV.

While putting his plea for the general credibility of the Gospel miracles, Mr. Lang keeps up a polemic against "psychology" and "the psychologist"* as being over-credulous. That is because some psychologists believe some things he does not believe, yet disbelieve some of the things he believes. We have seen him insisting that "our notions of the possible cease to be a criterion of truth or falsehood." In another place† he writes: "Thus Hume poses as a perfect judge of the possible, in a kind of omniscience." Yet a few pages before,‡ after citing M. Guyau's story (which he calls "an American myth") about the apparition of the

* *The Making of Religion*, pp. 10, 12, 13, etc.
† Work cited, p. 20.
‡ P. 14.

phantasm of an executed criminal to each of his gaol companions,* he writes : "For this *prodigious fable* no hint of reference to authority is given." So that Mr. Lang's "notion of the possible" is all the while to stand ; and *he* is to be free to "pose as a perfect judge of the possible, in a kind of omniscience." It is only Hume and Guyau and we lesser unbelievers who are to be denied the indulgence of general notions of possibility.

I am not concerned to discuss the philosophical basis of a writer who can thus play fast and loose with his own solemnly propounded principles, in addition to committing such blunders and misrepresentations as have been above exposed. But seeing that throughout his book Mr. Lang is constantly girding splenetically or satirically at all kinds of thinkers—albeit especially dead ones—who thwart him, snapping generally at "psychology" and "anthropology" and "science," and above all at "popular manuals," it becomes necessary to point out what worthless paralogisms are some of his own constructive positions which are eagerly welcomed by such quotidian teachers as Mr. Stead and the reviewers in the orthodox newspapers.

Where Bishop Douglas failed last century Mr. Lang fails doubly. The irresistible conclusion of all impartial comparative research is that the Gospel miracles were just what Bishop Douglas declared the Romish and Jansenist and other post-apostolic miracles to be, evidences of the ignorance, or the credulity, or the superstition, or the fanaticism, or the incapacity for investigation, of those who first related and accepted them. Instead of the admitted "possibilities" in the Gospels gaining any credit for the "impossibilities,"

* M. Guyau (in the original if not in the translation cited by Mr. Lang) mentions that they had *seen him executed.* Mr. Lang does not give this detail.

the reasonable conviction of the untruth of the latter class of items is a ground for regarding every statement in the Gospels as questionable.

It is idle to argue, as Mr. Lang's school implicitly do, that because some narratives are credited to-day which were discredited by some sceptics in the last generation or last century, therefore anything ever alleged may be true. The question of belief is finally a practical one, and neither Mr. Huxley in the effort to seem absolutely "agnostic," nor Mr. Lang in the effort to seem more scientific than the men of science, ever really doubted the untruth of myriads of the alleged prodigies of the past. Agnostically speaking, Balaam's ass may have talked; but Mr. Huxley no more believes in the "possibility" than do any of the scoffers. Mr. Lang affects to be open to miracle stories from any side. We have seen, nevertheless, how he treats M. Guyau's "phantasm." The argument that all religions have their miracles, he tells us, "is no longer of force with people who look on 'miracles' as='X phenomena,' not as divine evidences of the truth of this or that creed."* So that Mr. Lang perhaps believes in "Our Lord" as a non-supernatural personage. But let anyone ask Mr. Lang to believe in the miracles of the Buddha or of Apollonius of Tyana, and he will see what that profession of catholicity is worth.

As a matter of fact, it is the believers in the Gospel miracles as certificates to creed who batten on Mr. Lang's teaching. He is constantly girding of late years at the people whom he thinks too easy of unbelief in the narratives of the Old Testament, as to which he inclines to think that "what occurred in the development of Hebrew religion was precisely what the Bible tells us did occur."† All the while he is industriously ministering

* Work cited, p. 27. † *Id.*, p. 316.

to the uncritical bias of the most prejudiced and illogical people in the community.

Mr. Lang doubtless makes himself and others believe in his impartiality by bringing frequent charges of credulity and prejudice against professed men of science. But even this—a thing very well worth doing in an accurate and impartial way—he does recklessly, fallaciously, and in a spirit of prejudice. Because certain writers on psychology, including Hamilton, Maudsley, Kerner, Carpenter, Du Prel, and Zangwill, have accepted Coleridge's story of the illiterate German servant girl who in a fever talked languages she had heard a former master declaim, Mr. Lang must needs accuse "the psychologist" and "psychology" of accepting random anecdotes. Now, many psychologists tacitly, some avowedly, reject that anecdote as ill-certificated; but it is in reality no such monstrous marvel as Mr. Lang would make out. Dr. Maudsley gives from his own experience cases of prodigious verbal memory in idiots,* which for certain purposes prove all that could be proved by the Coleridge story. Besides, that story is quite as well certificated as the Gospel miracles, which Mr. Lang wants us to accept. Certainly we are all more or less apt to believe or to disbelieve too readily what suits or does not suit our predilection. But Mr. Lang is less likely to cure us by his example than by his precept. His adoption of the *rôle* of monitor, indeed, recalls a well-worn quotation about the Gracchi and sedition. The difference between him and "the psychologist" is that the latter tends to accept stories which chime with the observations of scientific men seeking after natural laws, and distrusts stories which suggest the eternal anti-scientific bias of religion; while Mr. Lang dislikes and rejects stories which clash with his religious and

* *The Physiology of Mind*, ed. 1876, p. 517.

sentimental predilections, and has never directly helped towards a scientific generalization in his life, except by way of negativing some other that passed for science. Latterly he is trying to undo whatever indirect service of that kind he once did, seeing as he now does that his former critical work unwittingly made for rational science and against "what the Bible tells us did occur." In view of his now habitual ascriptions of bias to those whose thought conflicts with his, it is time to designate his own bias.

V.

It remains to examine Mr. Lang's attempt to confute Hume's general argument on miracles, an attempt not more fortunate than the special polemic above dealt with. He quotes from Hume, with many italics, two well-known passages, which I copy, putting in the first my italics instead of his :—

"For, first, *there is not to be found, in all history*, any miracle attested by a *sufficient* number of men, of *such* unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, *as to secure us against all delusion in themselves;* of *such* undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time attesting facts performed in *such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable;* all of which circumstances are requisite to *give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.*"

It will be clear to the circumspect reader here that the stress of the argument lies mainly in the words I have italicized. Miracles may be affirmed by men of reputation for good sense, education, and integrity, in well-known places, and under risks of exposure if they are wrong; but never is the affirmation made by men of *such* authoritative character and powers, and under *such* conditions, as shall convince us that they were

neither deceiving nor deceived. That is to say, no testimony ever advanced for a miracle is sufficient. The word miracle, be it observed, has for Hume a clear sense, the sense which has properly belonged to the word ever since it came under theological discussion—"a violation of or departure from the (known) course of nature"—an act which cannot be accomplished by human and natural forces. Certain things, all men are agreed, have never occurred in the known "course of nature." It is wholly beside the case to say that entirely new things may occur to-day in the course of nature, though we do not happen to know the natural order of their causation. That is neither here nor there. The miracle is *an alleged* departure from the course of nature; it is so put forward by those who affirm it—be they Gospel-makers, saint-makers, Jesuits, or Jansenists. If it could be shown that the marvellous thing is after all really in the course of nature, that the prodigy is within normal human power, then the miracle is quashed as such; and its believers are so far stultified. But miracles, *so defined*, are constantly alleged; and the allegation has to be met. Mr. Huxley's objection* to the received definition of the word, therefore, is the merest waste of time in so far as it is put by way of criticism of Hume. Even if Mr. Huxley were right, which he certainly is not, in saying that *no* future event is "more than probable" (he never attempts to define "probable"), he is all the while arguing confusedly, not against Hume, but against the assertors of supernatural happenings, whom Hume was confuting in a rather more practical fashion. And the confutation is necessary.

Let us take now the second passage cited by Mr. Lang from Hume, with Mr. Lang's italics:—

* *Hume*, in "English Men of Letters" series, p. 131.

"There surely never was a greater number of miracles ascribed to one person than those which were lately said to have been wrought in France upon the tomb of Abbé Paris, the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the people were so long deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, were everywhere talked of as the usual effects of that holy sepulchre. But what is more extraordinary, many of the miracles were *immediately proved upon the spot*, before *judges of unquestioned integrity*, attested by *witnesses of credit and distinction*, in a *learned age*, and on the most *eminent theatre* that is *now in the world*. Nor is this all. A relation of them was published and dispersed everywhere; nor were the Jesuits, though a learned body, supported by the civil magistrates, and determined enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the miracles were said to have been wrought, ever able *distinctly to refute or detect them*. Where shall we find such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact? And what have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute *impossibility* or *miraculous nature* of the events which they relate? And this, surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation."

On this Mr. Lang makes the astonishing comment: "Thus Hume first denies the existence of such evidence, given in such circumstances as he demands, and then he produces an example of that very kind of evidence." It is always a little difficult to deal with criticisms which exhibit an entire failure to understand the matter criticised. Mr. Lang found the passage thus italicised by Dr. A. R. Wallace, who seems to have read it as unsuccessfully as he; and by means of the italics he supposes Hume to be convicted of self-contradiction. This view is a pure hallucination.

What is really proved by the episode is that it is not wise on any philosopher's part to trust much to the discrimination and candour of his readers. So to trust was in fact a common oversight on the part of Hume. Himself never guilty of merely verbal disputation, he took for granted that his readers would practise the same ethic, and would always look for his meaning

rather than juggle with his words. Thus he rarely took pains to guard against either misrepresentation or misunderstanding. The result is that, as has been remarked by Mr. Selby-Bigge,* it is often easy to win a verbal triumph over him. But there is almost no philosopher who can more rarely be convicted of a real fallacy. Compared with Kant, who chronically commits philosophic suicide, and ends in nullity, he is almost invulnerable. And in the present case his argument, when freed of the confusion in which his unanxious presentment allows some adversaries to involve it, is perfectly decisive. He does *not*, as Mr. Lang so gleefully avers, produce an example of the kind of evidence of which he denied the existence. For the outcome of all the affirmation concerning the Paris miracles was that even the weighty testimony advanced for them did *not* convince the majority of men that any miracles had happened. That is, the testimony was not of *such* authority, or given under *such* conditions, as could "give us a full assurance in the testimony of men." Q.E.D. It did not convince the French Jesuits; it did not convince the British Protestants. In France, Des Vœux, Vernet, and others, undertook to prove to any inquirer that no miracle had occurred; in England, Bishop Douglas, Adams, Leland, and others, did the same; and they further found in the character of Montgeron an argument against his credibility. Now the character of these orthodox unbelievers for probity and impartiality and good sense was quite as good as that of any of the best witnesses on the affirmative side. Then Hume's proposition was fully maintained: the evidence, high as was its character, failed to convince. On the other hand, though the Jansenists, as we have seen, had to give up the most quasi-miraculous cases,

* Introduction to Clarendon Press ed. of the *Enquiries*.

many on their side continued, despite all exposures and all arguments, to believe that supernatural cures took place at the tomb in the churchyard of St. Medard. Thus, though Hume's words as to the Jesuits being unable "distinctly to refute or detect" the alleged miracles may be open to some cavilling, the broad fact remains that the detection was not "distinct" enough to convince the mass of the original believers. When the convulsion mania followed on the miracles, some leading Jansenists opposed it as folly; but the devout Montgeron (a converted rake) stood by the convulsionists also.

The end of the whole matter is that Mr. Lang's unhappy attempt to overthrow Hume tends only the more fully to overthrow the creed of miracle. He does nothing whatever to fortify the Christian or any other miracles: rather he discredits them twice over. All that his argument amounts to is the contention that certain alleged miracles, including apparently those of "Our Lord," probably were not miracles at all; and this by way of confuting Hume! The attack on Hume as one who refused to investigate the evidence for alleged unusual phenomena is, as we have seen, an absurd parade of misconception. Hume, I take it, would have been as ready as anybody else to examine any new phenomena sanely presented to him by trustworthy people; but when a mass of variously dubious testimonies were thrust upon his notice as proofs of "violations of the order of nature," he felt it necessary to show that such violations are not susceptible of demonstration, whether they are alleged to have happened two thousand years ago or yesterday. That his effortless argument should be successively stumbled over by bigots and by bishops, by Mr. Huxley, by Dr. Wallace, and by Mr. Lang, is indeed suggestive of failure on his part to estimate aright the normal human faculty for fallacy.

THE TORY RELIGION.

(1897.)

THERE is an aspect of Mr. Balfour's recent work on religion* which seems to me to have been missed by the rationalist critics who have so ably dealt with it, and which is yet not unworthy of a little contemplation. I mean its political bearing. No doubt the critics have felt that it would seem irrelevant, and savouring of "personalities," to consider the book as the product of a party-leader, or to connect it in any way with political matters; and such an objection may be made to the present commentary. In that case, it must just stand or fall by the amount of truth and reason it may be found to contain; for I am unable to admit that any real relation under which a writer and his work can be studied is outside of the province either of criticism or of common-sense. Of course, if a man's opinions on any one point be cited merely in order to create odium against his other opinions among prejudiced readers, the process is not one of criticism at all. But it is a simple matter to compare the relations of a man's views without resorting to the methods of fanaticism. It is all a question of accuracy of argument and of estimate.

That Mr. Balfour connects his religious with his political positions in his own thought must be clear to

* *The Foundations of Belief.*

anyone who will make the necessary examination. By the word "connects" I do not at all mean that Mr. Balfour's religious and political positions are logically so continuous as to give each other mutual support. On the contrary, I suggest that they are so discontinuous, nay, so contradictory, as to discredit each other when logically compared. But the very fact of a man's holding inconsistent opinions is always a ground for surmising that they are reconciled in his mind by reason of being alike adjusted to his interests, since a wrong opinion is as much a matter of causation as a right one, and in the case of an intelligent man his interests are the most probable grounds for his fallacies. To put the matter squarely at the start, it seems probable that Mr. Balfour cherishes certain internecine opinions because in the ordinary course of life they are alike found to make for his political faction, despite their incoherence.

And, first, as to his religious doctrine, the practical bearing of which comes out most clearly in the peroration (p. 354) to *The Foundations of Belief*:—

"What is needed [observe the form of the statement] is such a living faith in God's relation to Man as shall leave no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed Order so apt to rise within us at the sight of undeserved pain. And this faith is possessed by those who vividly realize the Christian form of Theism. For they worship One Who is no remote contriver of a universe to whose ills He is indifferent. If they suffer, did He not on their account suffer also? If suffering falls not always on the most guilty, was He not innocent? Shall they cry aloud that the world is ill-designed for their convenience, when He for their sakes subjected Himself to its conditions? It is true that beliefs like these do not in any narrow sense resolve our doubts, nor provide us with explanations. But they give us something better than many explanations. For they minister, or rather the Reality behind them ministers, to one of our deepest ethical needs; to a need which, far from showing signs of diminution, seems to grow with the growth of civilization, and to touch us ever more keenly as the hardness of an earlier time dissolves away."

It will not be denied that this is a religion fairly well adapted to the needs of the Tory party; that the entertaining creed which Mr. Balfour so gravely describes is "what is needed" by politicians of his way of feeling. Of course, it is in a way unwarrantable to call any creed *the* Tory religion. We know that there are nowadays many Nonconformists on the "Unionist" side; that there are Baptist Tories, Unitarian Tories, Agnostic Tories, and Mormon Tories; and we cannot forget that it was a Tory Q.C. who uttered the apostrophe: "Good God, Bradlaugh, what does it matter whether there is a God or not?" To Conservatives of these and yet other ways of thinking is due the apologetic avowal that by "*the* Tory religion" one means merely the religion which on the face of it is best adapted to promote Conservatism. It is not even asserted here that the creed in question is Mr. Balfour's own. It is simply that which he propounds. But of its political convenience there can be little question. It is an imposing paraphrase of the time-honoured, but no longer otherwise honoured, teaching of the Church of England Catechism, which enjoins on ingenuous youth the disposition "to honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her; to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters; to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters; .....and to do my duty in that state of life into which it shall please God to call me." By the aid of such teaching, the English constitution was shaped and upheld according to Tory principles for many a long day; and if Mr. Balfour can manage it, the religious sanction, which in the past generation was so aggravatingly monopolized by Mr. Gladstone on behalf of an upsetting Liberalism, will gravitate to the side which has been espoused by Mr. Chamberlain. What is needed, as Mr. Balfour sees, is that the archaic simplicity

of the creed of the Catechism should be a little sophisticated to meet the needs of a generation in which everybody has been to school for at least a year or two, and can read the *Star*, and can be got at by Socialist and Secularist lectures in Hyde Park and elsewhere. So the right hon. gentleman reconstructs in his best prose that ancient idyll of Omnipotence coming down once from everywhere to earth to endure a bad quarter-of-an-hour *pour encourager les autres;* to make amends for æons of fore-planned and fore-known evil by an agreeable interlude of incarnation and condescension; to reconcile the coming holocausts of humanity to their lot in age after age by making out that "He" who wrought all the suffering was not above undergoing one twinge of it in the guise of one of his victims on one occasion in one geological epoch, calling Himself His Son in order to make the proceeding more easily intelligible to all those concerned, on the spot and afterwards. It is magnificent, and it is—politics, is it not?

But the dispassionate student must admit, and I do not see how the critical Conservative can deny, that Mr. Balfour has undergone grave risks in the attempt to maintain this picturesque system of ethics and cosmology in detail against the criticism of modern common-sense. The habit of parliamentary debating has led the right hon. gentleman to disregard unduly the dangers of arguing a ridiculous case. He knows that in any case whatever you can always attack the other side somehow; and he has overlooked the difference between special pleading in the House of Commons and special pleading in a book. In the House, inconsistency discredits no man, because all alike can be convicted; and bad reasoning by leaders loses no votes to either side. But in writing a book, as is implied in a passage of Holy Writ, a man is apt to give himself

away. Whether Mr. Balfour has not done so, let the reader judge.

The gist of Mr. Balfour's case against Naturalism—the very appropriate early name for Rationalism, which he has adopted—is easily stated, and might be much more plausibly put than it is in his book. It consists partly of the immemorial argument against scientific doctrine, from the errors of men of science, and partly of the stock argument of the employees of the Christian Evidence Society, that there are no "sanctions" for morals apart from belief in God. Mr. Balfour has been inconsiderate enough to put this argument first, and to follow it up with a cognate theorem about æsthetics, leaving the comparatively serviceable plea of the fallacies of science to emerge when the battle has been fought and lost, for those capable of an argument, over these unhappy propositions. No doubt it was his apparent success in putting the first of them to the congenial tribunal of the Church Congress that has encouraged the right hon. gentleman to this course, he feeling that what the Congress did not hoot must be sound theology. Let us see the distressing results.

In his chapter on "Naturalism and Ethics," Mr. Balfour, after admitting (p. 23) that "there is nothing in the theory of determinism which need modify the substance of the moral law," proceeds to make out that under determinism the moral law will not be a law at all. And he thus arrives (p. 24) at these anti-Christian positions :—

"It may be a small matter that determinism should render it thoroughly irrational to feel righteous indignation at the misconduct of other people. It cannot be wholly without importance that it should render it equally irrational to feel righteous indignation at our own. Self-condemnation, repentance, remorse, and the whole train of cognate emotions, are really so useful for the promotion of virtue that it is a pity to find them at a stroke thus deprived of all reasonable foundation, and reduced, if they are to

survive at all, to the position of amiable but unintelligent weaknesses. It is clear, moreover, that these emotions, if they are to fall, will not fall alone. What is to become of moral admiration?....."

It is always a risky thing for a man who does not believe in Christianity to go about to maintain it against reason. Mr. Balfour, with unskilful bat, has, so to speak, knocked the bails off the Christian wickets in the attempt to repel the rationalistic ball. For it is unquestionable "Christian truth" that—

1. Jesus Christ enjoined on his followers *(a)* to forgive their enemies, *(b)* to forgive sins until seventy times seven times, and *(c)* to judge not, that so they should not be judged.

2. The most prominent claim of modern Christianity is that its purpose is *to release men from the burden of the sense of sin.* That was part of the recent contention of Mr. Gladstone on the subject of the Atonement. Remorse is certainly not inculcated on believing Christians, who are emphatically told that their sins have been washed away by the Blood of the Lamb. Saint Paul, once converted, professes no painful remorse for his previous persecution of innocent people; and the sainted Peter of the Acts, within a few months of the episode of the Denial, feels quite free to punish the prevarication of Ananias and Sapphira by supernatural electrocution.

3. Moral admiration is clearly inconsistent with *(a)* Christian humility, and *(b)* the capital principle that all men's good deeds are the work of God's Grace.

Thus the words of Mr. Balfour, just cited, amount to saying: "It may be a small matter that men should ever so far forget their animal passions as to obey Jesus Christ's injunctions about forgiving offences and compassionating wrong-doers. But it cannot be a small matter that they should so far sink below rational

morality as to believe in the Christian doctrine that crimson sins are made white as snow by faith in a religious abracadabra. Besides, if they thus grow incapable of self-condemnation, they will grow incapable of admiring each other's qualities, treating these as the mere gifts of God or Nature." Now, it can hardly be that such implications as these will be found satisfactory to that section of the Nonconformist conscience which has followed Mr. Chamberlain, or that such suicidal reasoning will really attract recalcitrant Radicals to the creed of the Catechism. Mr. Balfour has partly miscalculated, in this as in other matters of sociology.

And while he has thus obliviously beaten down the Christian wicket, the right hon. gentleman, sad to say, has not even hit the attacking ball. For every rationalist out of his teens knows that this dialectic of the Christian Evidence Society can be disarmed at the third pass by the simplest of reasoning. In the first place, the man who rises above mere spontaneous indignation at wrong-doing to grave concern for the prevention of evil, whether of aggression or of retaliation, is to the eye of every really good and thoughtful citizen a far more moral organism than the angry clamourer for vengeance. Mr. Balfour will of course get due cheers for his doctrine from his following; but every man who has ever risen above anger to sadness and pity knows what is the value of such doctrine and such applause.

In the next place, determinism no more preserves a man from feeling distress over his own misdeeds than from feeling pain after a wound, or horror or despondency at the thought that he is stricken by an incurable disease. If I am born with a hump, or diseased eyes, or a hideous mole, or a club foot, or find that I have phthisis or hereditary insanity, no imaginable process of mere reasoning can make me absolutely careless on the point, though mere habit may come near doing so. The

fact that my hump is not my fault cannot make it unregrettable. The fact that the risk of my going mad or blind is clearly an unalterable result of antecedents, cannot save me from painful reflections over the prospect. The reflection that from birth I have been painfully ugly, and that the fact entitles me to sympathy and not to blame, cannot of itself make my ugliness quite indifferent to me, whether I be a Naturist or a Christian Theist. Mr. Balfour will not dispute any of these propositions. Why then should anyone suppose (I will not ask, why should Mr. Balfour argue) that the Naturist, the determinist, will be indifferent to his own known *moral* defects? If, holding certain ideals of conduct—and Mr. Balfour, as we have seen, does not pretend that under Naturalism our theories of conduct need worsen—I find in myself tendencies to fall below them, vices of appetite or temper, cowardice or egoism, recognizable to me as such, in what sense am I more inconsistent in deploring my mental flaws than in deploring the physical? How or why is it an "amiable weakness" in the Naturist to grieve over his own remembered ingratitude, or to be ashamed of having been drunk, any more than to lament his rheumatism or mourn his diabetes? On what logical principle is the imputation made in the one case and not in the other? Let Mr. Balfour supply an answer here if he can. I have never heard one which was not either a subterfuge or a stupidity. The truth seems to be that these stock pleas against Naturalism come from thinkers who either cannot understand what Naturalism is, or do not want to let its character be seen.

But let me not detain the reader from what is by far the most entertaining argument in Mr. Balfour's book—the application of the same *à priori* line of reasoning to questions of æsthetic pleasure. In his chapter on "Naturalism and Æsthetics," a piece of writing not

without touches of literary merit and of good judgment, Mr. Balfour has seen fit to argue that, even as his Naturist cannot have the pleasures of blame and moral admiration, or the tonic of remorse, so in the arts he cannot let himself enjoy the pleasures of eye and ear, because these are, on Naturist principles, evolved from primary animal perceptions. The doctrine is so odd that I must give it in Mr. Balfour's own words (pp. 65–66) :—

"We cannot willingly assent to a theory which makes a good composer only differ from a good cook in that he deals in more complicated relations, moves in a wider circle of associations, and arouses our feelings through a different sense. However little, therefore, we may be prepared to accept any particular scheme of metaphysical æsthetics—and [observe the revelation] most of these appear to me very absurd—we *must believe* [italics the present writer's] that somewhere and for some Being there shines an unchanging splendour of beauty, of which in Nature and Art we see, each from our own standpoint, only passing gleams and stray reflections, whose different aspects we cannot now co-ordinate, whose import we cannot fully comprehend, but which at least is something other than the chance play of subjective sensibility, or the far-off echo of ancestral lusts. No such mystical creed can, however, be squeezed out of observation and experiment. Science cannot give it us ; nor can it be forced into any sort of consistency with the Naturalistic Theory of the Universe."

The only meaning I can attach to this incomparable passage is that, in Mr. Balfour's opinion, we cannot go on enjoying music or beauty, any more than we can go on being indignant or panegyrical or remorseful, if we remain Naturists : that we can enjoy music and colour and beauty only because we feel that there is a God who is always enjoying them, and who kindly gave us a pinch of his tastes at first hand, recoiling from the thought of letting them reach us through evolution or mere "subjective sensibility," whatever that may be. In other words, Mr. Balfour's God-idea, or rather the God-idea which Mr. Balfour desires to popularize, is

that of a God who is always enjoying perfect music (with or without orchestra), consummate colour, and faultless form; and Mr. Balfour delicately implies that when he enjoys his favourite Handel it is with a happy sense of being in æsthetic communion with his (or the party's) once crucified Creator.

Far be it from me to say that this particular conception is not in some respects admirably adapted to the "needs," ethical and intellectual, of the Primrose League. But in the interests of criticism and logic, if not of Liberalism, I am bound to point out that in certain very serious respects it plays the same sort of havoc with Conservative interests as Mr. Balfour's doctrine on ethics does with the religion of the Gospels. For one thing, the Conservative party in mass is really not at Mr. Balfour's level in musical taste. Take his own declaration (pp. 47–48), unfortunately made in oblivion of the rest of his argument:—

"I believe that every impartial observer will admit that, of the æsthetic emotion actually experienced by any generation, the merest fraction is due to the 'immortal' productions of the generations which have long preceded it. Their immortality is an immortality of libraries and museums: they supply material to critics and historians rather than enjoyment to mankind: and if it were to be maintained that one music-hall song gives more æsthetic pleasure in a night than the most exquisite compositions of Palestrina in a decade, I know not how the proposition could be refuted."

Observe the painful dilemma to which this forgetfully frank avowal conducts the Christian Conservative. The mass of the party finding its musical joy rather in *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay* than in Beethoven's symphonies, it follows either that its joy is a mere chance play of subjective sensibility or a far-off echo of ancestral lusts, or that it enjoys *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay* in the happy consciousness that the Being who has returned the Unionist party to power listens to a constant round of music-hall

choruses, with no false notes and no wrong time. Either the mass of the Party has no æsthetic communion with "Him" at all—a supposition entirely at variance with the social gospel of the League—or that Omnipotence which divides the League's allegiance with her Majesty and the shade of the late Earl is in the way of sharing in the League's musical recreations. In which case, the disadvantage of the Naturist as beside the Christian Theist is not so obvious as could be wished. Of course, on Mr. Balfour's psychological and metaphysical principles, the Naturist cannot enjoy even the chance play of his subjective sensibilities or the echo of his ancestor's appetites. But perhaps we may at this stage spare ourselves the analysis of that particular piece of nonsense.

This, however, is not all. We have seen Mr. Balfour's recoil from the thought that there is anything in common between the functions of a composer and of a cook. To be sure, the leader of the Conservative party in the Commons cannot be expected to take up any other attitude; nor would it be a grateful task to challenge him; though I am not aware that male cooks (the others have no vote) are as a rule Radicals in their politics; and though I for my part have met a French cook who seemed to me a more capable man* than some (I name no names) of Mr. Balfour's colleagues on the Ministerial bench. But that is not the point. Just as unquestionable as Mr. Balfour's proposition about Palestrina and *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay* is this: That the mass of the Conservative party, especially of the upper sections, get far more satisfaction from the ministry of their cooks than from that of Beethoven. And now see the dismal consequence. Either the Party must be

* I allude to the incomparable M. Joseph. A millionaire Parisian friend procured me the experience.

held to dine daily in a sombre state of Godlessness and Naturalism, experiencing only a chance play of subjective sensibility and an echo (not so far-off) of ancestral lusts, or it must claim to enjoy its dinner in the happy knowledge that somewhere and somehow, for the customary Being, there steams an unchanging succession of delicious and undiminishing dishes, with wines from the Widow's Cruse and no headache next morning, because next morning never arrives. To this complexion comes the creed of the good Conservative, when reasoned out on the philosophical lines laid down by Mr. Balfour.

I may perhaps be told that, this being so, there is no point in representing Mr. Balfour as writing his book in the interests of his party ; that he cannot be supposed to aim at rallying the pious to the Conservative flag by such grotesque consolations as those we have been considering. But to argue thus would be to confuse purpose with achievement. If Mr. Balfour knew how perfectly absurd his book is, he could not have written it for any purpose whatever. Having written it, he must be supposed to think it has some argumentative force ; and he cannot be conceived as realizing what a consummate piece of self-stultification the whole performance is. Nor, when all is said, are we free to conclude that the book will quite miss its end. I confess I have seen no sign that its readers, or the majority of its critics, or even such rationalistic critics as Mr. Spencer and Professor Pearson, realize the pervading futility of its reasoning. We are indeed driven to suppose that some Christians must be made uneasy by Mr. Balfour's amusingly unconscious Antichristism ; to say nothing of the difficulty, for a normal person, of ever feeling that he believes a word he says. But then it is not a question of convincing men of his sincerity ; and still less is it a question of giving reasonable arguments

in support of Christianity. If it were a question of maintaining consistency, Mr. Balfour's treatment of the Canon of Consistency would alone serve to give him away; since every man of moderate intelligence can see, if he will use it, that Mr. Balfour habitually appeals in politics, wherever he possibly can, to the logical test which he seeks to elbow off the field of religion. But Mr. Balfour was really not appealing to intelligence and honesty at all. He was simply appealing to the Christian interest—to the multitude of Churchmen and laymen, men and women, who go to church and take the Communion because they were brought up to do so; who ask from a statesman, not reasoning or sincerity, but simply a declaration that he is on their side; and who are really not capable of distinguishing between sophistry and sincerity in such matters, having lost their own sincerity, and therefore their palate for it, by the long practice of the cruder sorts of sophistry on their own account.

So that, after all, the nonsense we have been dissecting may do very well as a Tory religion. Mr. Chamberlain will not attack it, and neither will Mr. Courtney, whatever they may think of it. Mr. Arthur Lynch has forcibly said that "Disraeli could not have written *The Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, but his capable mind could have at one effort spanned over all that was in the position, and then decided not to touch it." This is doubtless so; but it may be disputed whether Disraeli would not have been ready to write *The Foundations of Belief*, which is an attempt to translate the "Defence" into a form understanded of the clergy, if he could have done it, and if he had realized how much political capital was to be made of it. He was at least too clever not to know that Mr. Gladstone's championship of Christianity did much for him as a leader. Mr. Balfour has certainly seen as much, and has acted on the knowledge.

We should partly misconceive Mr. Balfour, however, if we supposed him to have written his books in the spirit in which Disraeli *would* have written the last if he could. The two leaders would differ here as they differed in the nature of their bias to Conservatism. Both insincere, they differ profoundly in their insincerities. Disraeli's was that of a man who, with no political convictions whatever, deliberately chose the side which gave him the best prospect of a career, and developed the tastes and the position required. Mr. Balfour, to do him justice, has a more inward inclination to Conservatism than that. Indeed, he may be even said to be quite sincere in this one quality—the constitutional disposition to negate other people's positive plans, ideals, doctrines. It is his primary bias. Save in the matter of golf and oratorio, he can hardly be said to have a single positive, independent, active impulse ; his typical state of mind is that of spontaneous objection to other people's impulses. In that spirit he wrote his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, which expresses no conviction whatever, but tries to make out that we have no more right to our reasoned convictions than the most superstitious pietist has to his superstitions. In that spirit he has shaped his political career, which is one of absolute nullity as regards constructive ideas, but of considerable industry as regards thwarting other men's. In that spirit he wrote his criticism on Cobden, which seeks to make out Cobden a self-seeker without being able to pretend that the landlords who opposed him were right ; his address to the St. Andrew's students, exhorting them not to cherish Liberal hopes for human progress ; his address to the Church Congress, congratulating Christians on holding a more hopeful creed than do rationalists ; and his last defence of Christianity against reason, in which, it is bare justice to say, he does not once pretend that he himself holds a shred of Christian belief. And

it is entertaining to note that in his very interesting essay on Handel, which, apart from his book on golf, is his one literary expression of a positive predilection, he is visibly on the side of oratorio because musical taste in general has run to opera.

With this idiosyncrasy, it is clear, Mr. Balfour can for political purposes write a defence of a creed in which he does not believe, without being in general insincere in the way in which another unbeliever would be insincere in doing the same thing. His insincerity (to put the point paradoxically) is the sincerest thing in him. Let him have the full benefit of the discrimination. But when the man with no convictions sees fit to pen such passages as those first above cited about the Christian hocus-pocus of sacrificial redemption satisfying our "deepest ethical needs," and about its becoming more and more satisfactory "as the hardness of an earlier time passes away," he becomes insincere in the very vulgarest way, the way of Chadband and of that Rev. Mr. Brooks whom Mr. Balfour thought it right to reward out of the national treasury for what, on the face of it, was the merest party propaganda, whatever were the writer's character. The statesman who carried through that transaction penned at least the peroration of *The Foundations of Belief*.

MR. GLADSTONE ON THE ATONEMENT.

(1894.)

I.

Mr. Gladstone has put a characteristic and apparently final anti-climax to a political career in which previous ebbs of action had served only to signalize the more the upward impetus. His laying down of power has been as unique as his way of using it. There is no case in English politics parallel to this of a great Minister deliberately leaving office in the midst of a great uncompleted task, on a pressure of bodily infirmity which fell far short of being irresistible. But we are for the moment concerned less with his statesmanship than with that side of him which has always made such a picturesque contrast to his statesmanship—his self-imposed mission of maintaining the Christian religion against modern criticism.

Unable to rest from mental conflict while strength endures, he has turned in his suddenly-won leisure to his old tasks of theology ; and after a perturbed tractate on "Schism," apparently designed to recommend, so far as may be, High Church tradition to the Nonconformist conscience, we have from him a no less agitated treatise on "True and False Conceptions of the Atonement," designed to reconcile the doctrine in question to the modern ethical sense. One effect of Mr. Gladstone's political life on his religious activities has been to keep

him awake to the practical or popular bearing of his controversies. He does not often do battle with the "higher criticism" in any direction: it is the direct and easily-appreciated attacks on his faith that bring him out with his war-gear on. The incidental gibes of Mr. Huxley, the plain pleas of Colonel Ingersoll, and the Christology of the three-volume novel, are the forms of propaganda which he is concerned to repel; and his latest appearance is *àpropos* of Mrs. Besant's Autobiography. The broad explanation of publicity is doubtless the right one for the choice of text. At first sight it would seem as if there were an economy of risk in his selection of *Robert Elsmere* and Mrs. Besant's only semi-polemical narrative for attack, instead of one of the treatises which set forth the latest results of historic survey or the analysis of the documents. He never crossed swords with Colenso or Kuenen, Havet or the author of *Supernatural Religion*. But it is not that he prefers to war with women: in Mr. Huxley he chose a formidable foe enough; it is simply that Mrs. Ward and Mrs. Besant have been read by the multitude and acclaimed in the market-place, and that the life-long seeker of the suffrages of the majority must needs go where the majority are to be got at.

Unfortunately, it cannot be said that in his last attempt to confute a woman he has had regard to the code which prescribes that a woman shall be criticised not less courteously than a man. He has thought fit to say of Mrs. Besant's Autobiography in the opening sentences of his article that

> "it is to be regretted that at a particular point of the narrative the discussion borders on the loathsome. Indeed, it becomes hard to conceive by what mental process Mrs. Besant can have convinced herself that it was part of her mission as a woman to open such a subject as that of the Ninth Chapter, in the face of the world, and in a book meant for popular perusal."

Now, it is part of Mr. Gladstone's case against Mrs. Besant that there is a "general absence of argument to explain the causes of her movements," that her beliefs "are nowhere based on reasoning, but they rest upon one and the same authority—the authority of Mrs. Besant." If Mr. Gladstone is ever to act on the principle he here contends for, it ought to have been in support of his attack on Mrs. Besant's Neo-Malthusian work as "loathsome." Such a deliverance on such a subject, from such a quarter, calls for reasoned justification, if ever a judgment does. But we have only "the authority of Mr. Gladstone" for the insulting epithet. In such a case epithets are fitly to be met by epithets, and, were it not that I never found cause to use such terms of him in a study of his whole career, I should be much disposed to say that the expression here used by a man in Mr. Gladstone's place towards a woman in Mrs. Besant's is both coarse and cowardly. We can only decide that theologizing is worse for his moral health than politics, and that in the study he deteriorates for lack of the discipline of the forum.

It was not to be expected, of course, that at his time of life, in the atmosphere of his theological library, Mr. Gladstone should learn to look scientifically at a problem which underlies all the problems of politics. He has no science. I have described him as the greatest of empirics; and that description may be paraphrased by saying that for posterity he will figure as an eminent statesman who in a generally scientific period never got beyond applying rule-of-thumb to politics. Such a man, consistent at least in superficiality, naturally gets rid of a doctrine which deals with the root difficulty of politics by aspersing it as "loathsome." It is beyond his intellectual range. But if he had not fallen from the standards of chivalry which he had set himself in his life-long warfare with

men, he would not have selected as a target for the aspersion a woman who has in her time undergone an infinity of vulgar odium on the very ground on which he now gratuitously assails her, and above all he would not have used that cheap preliminary means of exciting his readers' prejudice against her in an argument on a totally different issue. It is unhappily not a difficult thing to show that Mrs. Besant's last developments of opinion have shaken the credit of her dialectic in general; and this was all that Mr. Gladstone as a fair controversialist need have tried to do. But he has so far fallen below, I will not merely say his former standards, but the most ordinary standards, of controversy that he is not ashamed to say of Mrs. Besant that "she apparently thinks it sufficient to supply us with her three portraits, as carrying with them sufficient attestation." He is the last man who should resort to such a line of attack. If there is any public man who has been accused, and who has given colour for the accusation, of posing his personality by way of making capital for his cause—if there is any statesman who has been photographed to excess in family postures for the public, it is he. Henceforth it will be difficult to condemn as outrageous the Tory attacks which exhibit him as cajoling crowds from carriage windows, cutting down trees in view of the photographer, and reading the lessons in church with an eye to the newspapers. A man whose biography has been published with portraits half-a-dozen times over must surely have known that these matters are usually the concern and suggestion of the publisher. Decidedly Mr. Gladstone is deteriorating over his books of devotion.

It is not only in his incidental flings at Mrs. Besant, however, that he brings on himself a smashing *tu quoque*—the kind of criticism from which he has most to suffer. It is really a startling thing that a man with

such a past as his should begin an argument with a sneer at anybody for preserving self-confidence after many changes of opinion. With an exquisite unconsciousness, he writes of Mrs. Besant that

> "An ordinary mind would suppose that modesty was the one lesson which she could not have failed to learn from her extraordinary permutations; but the chemist who shall analyze by percentages the contents of these pages will not, I apprehend, be in a condition to report that of such an element he can find even the infinitesimal quantity usually and conveniently denominated a 'trace.'"

This is operose sarcasm with a vengeance; but if it hits anybody it rakes fore and aft the character of the writer. If any statesman in human history has exhibited "extraordinary permutations," it is Mr. Gladstone; and whatever he may usually affect in the way of modesty, it is hard to credit him with much of it in view of this gratuitous outcry against another person's deficiency. It has been Mrs. Besant's fortune to elicit jeers at change of attitude from more than one person who has boxed the compass of attitude; but there is no such notable case in point as Mr. Gladstone's. The "rising hope of the stern unbending Tories" who became the abomination of desolation to Toryism; the pious young defender of slavery who lived to lead Radicalism; the opponent of Jewish emancipation who lived to argue for the admission of Atheists; the protectionist who turned free trader; the predictor of great things for the South in the American Civil War, who was to apologize in a few years' time for his blunder; the pro-Turkish Minister who voted for the Crimean War and lived to talk of driving the Turk, bag and baggage, out of Europe; the strategist who disestablished the Irish Church within three years of a declaration that the question was outside practical politics; the elaborate exponent of the State Church

principle who lived to contemplate Disestablishment all round; the statesman who at forty panegyrized the Union, and lived to vituperate it at eighty; the leader who in 1871 scouted contemptuously the idea of Home Rule, and in 1886 and 1892 introduced Home Rule Bills; the Premier who imprisoned Mr. Parnell and dragooned Ireland, and then after a few years' time declaimed against his rivals for dragooning Ireland and imprisoning Mr. O'Brien; the impassioned censor of Austria who abjectly apologized to Austria's representative—this is hardly the authority to reprobate "permutations" and prescribe modesty to permutators. It will be hard to find more than a technical "trace" of modesty in Mr. Gladstone's ethical attitude, though his changes have been rather more serious than Mrs. Besant's in their consequences to other people. He has had to confess to "blood-guiltiness" in the Transvaal and in Egypt. But the memory of the blood spilt in South Africa and North Africa has never seemed to restrain him from imputing moral guilt to sincere unbelievers who reject the creed that allowed him to compass so much blundering bloodshed, or from charging culpable recklessness on people whose alleged blunders, even if really such, broke no bones. The "absolute self-complacency of the authoress" must yield to the absolute self-complacency of her critic.

Mrs. Besant's permutations have been serious enough in all conscience. But at least she can claim that they were never the index of her self-interest. Her changes brought her insult and odium, and, when no odium, pain. She did not change because it was advantageous to change. Can Mr. Gladstone claim as much? I have sought to show, on his behalf, that his moral nature is very much sounder than his enemies allow, and that his equivocal courses and circuitous justifications represent rather defect of insight and logic than

defect of good intention. But it is not to be disputed that the defect of insight and logic has again and again put him in the position of doing a good action on bad grounds after refusing to do it on good ones; that he decided to disestablish the Irish Church only when he needed a "cry" to go to the country with; that he threw over Toryism mainly because Disraeli had supplanted him in the Tory leadership; that he saw the policy of Home Rule only when Parnell hemmed him in with a coalition of Nationalists and Tories; that he only learned the turpitude of the Union when it suited him to find it blameworthy. Decidedly he is the last man who should sneer at permutations. And it speaks ill for the effect of those self-communings which he has so long planned for his closing years that they leave him rather less self-critical and chastened than before.

II.

From Mr. Gladstone's practice we turn to his theory. He has chosen to preface his argument on the Atonement with the criticisms above discussed, and they unluckily illuminate his exposition. It becomes plain that a Christian controversialist bent on vindicating the Atonement is simply a controversialist like unto others, and in no respect saved from the devices of the unregenerate. He has been roused by Mrs. Besant's formulation of four main ethical problems of Christianity which she early found insoluble; and he selects for this essay that one which, whether or not it agitates him most, seems to him the easiest to deal with. They run:—

"1. The eternity of punishment after death.

"2. The meaning of goodness and love, as applied to a God who had made this world with all its sin and misery.

"3. *The nature of the Atonement of Christ, and the justice of*

God in accepting a vicarious suffering from Christ, and a vicarious righteousness from the sinner.

"4. The meaning of inspiration as applied to the Bible, and the reconciliation of the perfections of the Author with the blunders and immoralities of the work."

"These propositions," says Mr. Gladstone, "were rejected by the young lady not long out of her teens." Mr. Gladstone must be a good deal agitated when he can describe problems as propositions; and still more so when, at the close of his article, he can write that "the *third proposition of Mrs. Besant*, with which alone we are here concerned, is naught." He means that the answer given by Mrs. Besant to her third problem "is naught." But that is a trifle, as indeed is the petulance about the young lady not long out of her teens. Mr. Gladstone, for his part, accepted the said "propositions" *in* his teens, and has never got any further on the subject; and it is difficult to see that even his sex makes his more juvenile conviction the more authoritative. The outbreak can but be taken to indicate that, as he is willing to employ women as canvassers in politics, but not to give them the vote, he is willing to use their abundant services in religion without recognizing that they are entitled to have an opinion of their own, whether in their teens or their 'ties.

More serious is the manner of his handling of the "proposition" on its merits. He undertakes to apply to it the test of reasoning which he says Mrs. Besant does not apply—this in the full knowledge that in separate publications she had long ago given her reasons. On the merits of the issue, it is very obvious that the first three of the four topics hang inseparably together, and that to reason out the one we must take up the others. The Atonement is held to save men from eternal punishment; and the question of the justice of God in accepting a vicarious sacrifice is bound

up with the question of the justice of a scheme which makes sin, sacrifice, and eternal punishment necessary. But Mr. Gladstone elects to perform on the single tight-rope of the theology of the Atonement. He reluctantly admits that "statements are sometimes made by unwise or uninstructed persons—indeed, I have myself heard such statements from the pulpit—which give, or appear to give, countenance" to attacks on the doctrine of the Atonement. The statements in question are to the effect that "when pardon has been obtained under the Gospel, a debt is paid off, and God gives 'a receipt in full.'" Well, let Mr. Gladstone say what he will, that is the gist of evangelical Christianity, put in plain words for simple men; and the practical bearing of it is very well seen in the language of his own early guide, philosopher, and friend, Samuel Wilberforce, in regard to a bishop who warned people against "placing such an unbounded reliance on the merits of Christ as to think their own endeavours quite unnecessary, and not in the least available to salvation." The language of this warning, says Wilberforce, "savours of a most dangerous school, and implies no small indistinctness as to Christian truth."* Wilberforce goes on to argue, as so many Christists have done before and since, and as Mr. Gladstone does now, that men must be moral as well as Christian; but what he is really exercised about is the harm of not recognizing that the "blood of Christ" is the first and the last thing for Christians. And this is the practical ethical issue. There is nothing new in Mr. Gladstone's thesis or argumentation. The point is as old, in Christism, as Paul and James, and had equally arisen in all the previous religions, Judaic and Pagan alike. What Pauline Christism did was to plunge ethics afresh into the old confusion after common sense

* *History of the American Church*, 1844, p. 263.

had cleared up the point for all educated Pagans ; and it is because moral common sense has in modern times more and more strongly and generally revolted against the doctrine of salvation by faith in all its forms that we have more and more attempts on the part of sensitive Christians like Mr. Gladstone to make out that the doctrine is in no way opposed to sound ethics. But the trouble in the case of Christianity is that, being a highly organized ecclesiasticism, it dares not do what the instructed Pagans did—throw over the plea of blood redemption altogether. On the doctrine of blood redemption the whole fabric of organized or historic Christianity stands ; and no amount of verbal juggling will ever enable the Church to be at once rationally moral and faithfully Christist. Let us put a test which Mr. Gladstone carefully evades. The old creed-framers, albeit they had their own compromises, had a far firmer grasp of the logic of their position than the modern trimmers ; and this is what they came to in England three hundred years ago :—

"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School authors say) deserve grace of congruity ; yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, *we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.*"

"They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law and the light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."

These are the Thirteenth and Eighteenth of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England ; and, whether or not the majority of her subscribing clergy hold to them, we must assume that Mr. Gladstone does. Their force is clear. Trimmers try to save the Eighteenth by

pleading that "saved by" does not mean "saved in," and that the denial of the "saved by" does not exclude "saved in"; but the Thirteenth Article, declaring that there can be no good works on the part of unbelievers, suffices to show the spirit of the Eighteenth. This, then, is the corollary Mr. Gladstone has to meet: this is the ethical test, for moderns, of the doctrine of the Atonement. His plea is the old one, that while faith in the sacrifice works salvation, salvation is naught unless moral reform follows on the faith. Let it be so: the test question is, Whether the moral reform cannot take place without the faith; whether the unbeliever's morality may not be superior to the believer's. If the Christian grants this, the logical foundation of his creed is gone. If he stands to the Thirteenth Article, he goes in the teeth of all enlightened moral instinct. On one horn or other of the dilemma he must be impaled.

But even on his own ground—the ground to which he is careful to restrict the dispute—Mr. Gladstone's case collapses. He has to rebut the protest that vicarious suffering and vicarious righteousness are alike alien to the ethical conception of a good God; and how does he rebut it? By saying that

> "This dispensation of Atonement is part and parcel of the Incarnation; and the Incarnation, undertaken in order to suffer, by the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief, *is mystery, but is not injustice;* does not involve the idea of injustice, and is not liable to the charge."

And this, forsooth, is the "reasoning" that is to shame Mrs. Besant's lack of it! Mr. Gladstone professes to "make good" his contention, but he only affects to do so as regards the conception of vicarious righteousness from the human point of view. Of the conception of Infinitude decreeing sin and vicarious suffering for that sin he offers no justification, and his thesis repels justification. "It is mystery, but is not injustice!" Mr.

Gladstone avers that he does not feel free to meet Mrs. Besant's *ipsa dixit* with his own *ipse dixit:* but that is precisely what he does; and Mrs. Besant's youthful dictum happens here to be that of enlightened common sense, whereas his is that of mediæval obscurantism. If there is "mystery" in the case, no ethical proposition whatever can hold of it. The Christian plea of "mystery" is on all fours with the Pagan; for precisely so did the Pagans of old, like the Hindus of to-day, shield an immoral doctrine of Deity. And the ethical reason of to-day will quash the Christian plea much more decisively than the mystery-mongering Christists of antiquity could possibly do the Pagan. Once for all, the conception of a Deity who foreordains sin and the punishment of sin, but "satisfies his justice" by torturing one on behalf of millions whom he considers deserving of torture, or by taking the life of one for the life of all or many, is a gross relic of gross barbarism; and the making out the one sufferer himself to be at the same time the God who decrees the suffering, and a sufferer subordinate to that God, only multiplies the absurdity without in the least degree improving the ethic.

Mr. Gladstone, as we have noted, is careful to keep the "suffering" apart as far as he can from the idea of "propitiation," a severance which reduces a whole mischievous doctrine to two practically lifeless halves; but he cannot so far evade the issue as not to show that "mystery" is his last resort on pressure; and there is in reality no other resort. He must needs incidentally avow that but for the suffering of Christ the whole human race, on Christist principles, "must have suffered" in its "own helpless guilt." He seeks to salve the doctrine of salvation by drawing away attention from that monstrous implication and dwelling on the moral reform that is to follow on faith; and to

make good his point he falsifies the Christian creed. He writes :—

"If there be a reserve, if the heart will not part with some treasured corruption; if, like the young man in the Gospel, it will not separate from all that separates from Christ, the remedial process is intercepted, the avenging record is not blotted out, there is no pardon, no justification, no capable subject upon which the blessing can descend."

What becomes here of death-bed repentance? What of the deliverances in the Gospels in which all is put upon faith, and nothing on works? Mr. Gladstone is simply doing what the Church has always been forced to do in self-defence, despite alike Catholic traffic in indulgences and Lutheran evangelicalism. A Church, to subsist long, must have regard to conduct, and so must prescribe good conduct to its adherents; but the creeds of all the great Churches alike permit of death-bed repentance after a career of crime. Here Mr. Gladstone's argument is "naught": it is worse—it is an evasion. He can make it plausible only by discussing "punishment" as a purely earthly matter, and ignoring the future state on which his creed especially insists as the state of punishment or reward.

But, again, on the plan of defining punishment as the state of mind of the subject in this life—a plan which destroys at once all the arguments for Christianity as a police system or agency—Mr. Gladstone makes out nothing for the Atonement in his conception of it that is not made out by the same reasoning for the conception of it which he declares to be false and pernicious. He will not have it that the Atonement is a "substitute" for righteousness; only that it is a "guarantee." But how is it a guarantee? In respect, says Mr. Gladstone, that the sense of pardon gives relief and encouragement to the sinner. "The graver the fault may have been, the greater is the relief enjoyed." As if it were an

ethical undertaking to give the completest possible sense of relief to men guilty of the greatest crimes! Of course the relief, in Mr. Gladstone's view, is to be a stimulant to right action. "So that, as between God and man, pardon is a real power, helpful to the great end of sanctification." That is to say, cheerful confidence and complacency becomes a good thing in the case of one who has sinned much, and is only out of place in the case of one who has changed much, like Mrs. Besant. Modesty is for heretics, but not for converted criminals: what *they* need is encouragement. But that, as it happens, is just the ground on which the Catholic Church defends confession and absolution. The sinner is to be encouraged in good conduct by knowing that his past sin is forgiven. On the efficacy of the method let the police of Catholic countries speak. The habitual confession and absolution of brigands and murderers, who remain brigands and murderers all the same, is the outcome of the policy of "pardon as between God and man."

Of course the Church, like Mr. Gladstone, protests that the pardon cannot avail if the sin be continued in. But of what avail is this stipulation if fresh sin may be freshly repented of and freshly absolved? To this inexorable dilemma, will he nill he, Mr. Gladstone must come. "Unless the will have been rectified," he insists, "there can be no effective pardon." But is there only one chance? Is the sinner told that if he sins but once more there is no hope for him? Certainly not; else where would be the "encouragement" of pardon? The complacent convert may indeed be sure that he will never sin again; it is understood that he generally professes such assurance; but, being what he is, he is pretty sure to offend again—nay, he is emphatically informed by his sacred books that he cannot avoid sinning—and what then becomes of the stimulating and

regenerating effect of pardon unless he is reassured by a fresh sense of absolution on a fresh repentance? The medicine, to be of any avail, must be repeated; and the Protestant or evangelical or Gladstonian doctrine of forgiveness comes to the same thing as the Catholic: it is merely absolution *minus* confession. The "guarantee" doctrine comes to the same thing as the "substitution" doctrine: the substitution is only made conditional, and the condition is as easily fulfilled a hundred times as once. "Until seventy times seven" is the authoritative deliverance.

Nothing further is needed to show that Mr. Gladstone's defence is "naught"—is only the old sophism to glose the old dilemma. To defend a doctrine framed for the case of incurably fallible men, he makes the hypothesis of an ideal "rectification" of the will on the act of belief—a thing which never occurred and never will occur. He speaks of the "Redeemer" as furnishing "in His own person a type, a matrix so to speak, for humanity raised to its absolute perfection." Yet, to keep intact the doctrine of the Incarnation, we are told that the Redeemer's human nature was "not strictly perfect, but perfectible." Where then is the standard of perfection; and who is to be the judge of it in this controversy? The Gospel Jesus is anything but perfect to the rationalist's judgment: has Mr. Gladstone anyone else to offer as a type, any illustration of "recovered excellence"? Has he himself this "egregious self-confidence," so far in excess of Mrs. Besant's, even in her theosophic stage? His political discipline has thus far saved him from such an extremity; and in the essay before us he is finally fain to fall back on the doubt "whether the Christian Church at large is wholly exempt from the possibility of going astray in matters *not vital to the Christian faith; whether the promise of perpetual life is equivalent to a promise of perpetual and perfect*

health." He ends as he began his attack on Mrs. Besant, by admitting that many Christians hold what he declares to be her erroneous conception of the doctrine of the Atonement. But all the same he rounds off the controversy by the very simple expedient of begging the question.

"*The Christian Church has the promise and the note of sanctity, no less than of truth.* And yet this promise of an indestructible sanctity and striving after the image of God does not exclude vast masses of sin from her precincts. Why should imperfections in belief be less compatible with the human conditions of the Christian dispensation than imperfections in practice, provided .....they do not touch the central seat of life?.....We know that the tares are mingled with the wheat, and how can we be certain that those tares may not signify perverted thought as well as corrupted action?"

Observe the reasoning. The all-essential assumption that the Christian Church has sanctity and truth is settled by the simple "authority of Mr. Gladstone." Those of us who say she is built on delusion and falls below civilized ethical thought are thus disposed of. At the same time her "vast masses of sin" are admitted, so as to conform plausibly to the facts, and equally vast masses of "error" are hinted at as probable. In short, it does not greatly matter what Christians believe so long as the Church holds together. "But," says Mr. Gladstone,

"I desist from this strain of observation, and bring these remarks to a close with *the suggestion* that, *according to the established doctrine of Holy Scripture and of the Christian Church*, the great Sacrifice of Calvary does not undermine or enfeeble, but illuminates and sustains the moral law.....!"

There is certainly no "egregious self-confidence" here; the question is whether there is even an arguable proposition. "According to the established doctrine," we all know, the doctrine of the Atonement is all right. But we have seen what the established doctrine is worth

when tested by reason and civilized ethics. If there is any moral law worthy of the name, it is the law of reason; and that law, so far from being illuminated and sustained, is reduced to chaos and nullity by the maintenance, however disguised, of an ethical superstition dating from the remotest ages of ignorance.

III.

This last consideration, after all, is the key to the situation. Men like Mr. Gladstone remain fixed in philosophical hallucinations because their logical faculty is weaker than their educational or temperamental bias, and because they have never acquired the concrete knowledge which might suffice so to operate on their simpler perception as to correct even the bias of training and habit. Mr. Gladstone had his bias corrected in politics by the irresistible pressure of living conditions. To be a Liberal leader he had to alter his bias; and he had to choose between leading the Liberals and being led by a Tory rival. The pressure occurred afresh with every new development of democratic feeling. Hence, though he generally gave bad or sophistical reasons for his changes, he has changed in the main, so far as he went, on the lines of common-sense. In the department of faith, however, he has not only been under no practical pressure from the living movement of thought (as he would have been had he become an Archbishop), but he seems to have kept himself largely ignorant of the new lore which so profoundly affects the opinions of many other men not equal to him in general energy of mind, or perhaps even in special logical faculty. He probably ignored Colenso, Strauss, and Baur in their day; and it is fair to presume that he has equally ignored the culminating work of comparative hierology.

Strauss's deep saying, that "the true criticism of dogma is its history," is fully justified only when the history has been carried backwards as well as onwards from the Christian starting-point. And there is nothing better established than the fact that the Christian doctrines of Incarnation and Atonement are merely adaptations of beliefs and practices which go back to the times of utter savagery. It is in communities deeply stamped with the traits of savagery that they have been most vividly set forth, outside of Christendom. The doctrine of redemption from sin and punishment by the blood of a crucified or otherwise slain victim, who becomes a God in virtue of being chosen as a sacrifice, is seen nowhere more energetically in action than in the two far-removed cults of the Khonds in India and of the leading deities of pre-Christian Mexico. In neither case had Christianity any part in setting up the belief: Christianity is simply one of the forms in which it has been maintained. The only difference is that the Christian doctrine affirms one sacrifice for all sin, while the Mexicans and the Khonds repeated the sacrifice at least every year. That makes no difference to the ethic of the doctrine; it only represents the development of a humaner civilization on the side of practice—a development in which many Pagan cults shared equally with the Christist. The cults of Attis and Adonis and Hercules all came latterly to dispense with fresh sacrifices; as they needs must at a time when the Roman emperors suppressed human sacrifices in all parts of their dominions; but they all alike, with those of Osiris and Mithra, offered to the believer the "comfort" of forgiveness for sin, whether through the suffering of the God, or through the repeated ritual "mass" or Holy Communion in which he was mystically supposed to be eaten afresh, or in respect of renewed "purification" by the blood of actual calves and lambs—the

taurobolia and the *criobolia*—or through all together. Mr. Gladstone writes :—

"It was said that Socrates plucked wisdom down from Heaven. The Incarnation brought righteousness out of the region of cold abstractions, clothed it in flesh and blood, opened for it the shortest and the broadest way to all our sympathies, gave it the firmest command over the springs of human action, by incorporating it in a person, and making it, as has been beautifully said, liable to love."

This is simply, in Selden's phrase, "rhetoric turned into logic." But, as rhetoric, it is false to begin with, inasmuch as the idea of "Incarnation" had played an abundant part in a dozen religions before Christianity was ever heard of by that name. The women "wept for Tammuz" ages before they wept for Jesus; they wept for Osiris and Attis and Adonis and Dionysos and Mithra and Hercules, one and all, as having taken "the shortest and broadest way to all our sympathies," and as being "liable to love"; and on that score they adore Krishna to-day. The Christian claims, of course, that his God alone clothes "righteousness" in flesh and blood. That is simply his special fanaticism, partially supported by the preservation of the ethic of his system in sacred books on the lines of Judaic precedent. Had the lore of Mithraism been preserved, it might easily have rivalled that of Jesuism; and it probably would have escaped the incurable reproach of dooming to eternal and punitive misery all who did not accept it. In these respects the lore of Asian Buddha surpasses that of European Christism even now. But however that may be, the Christian ethic is profoundly imperfect and inadequate to the modern civilized sense; and in nothing more so than in the kindred dogmas of Salvation and Damnation, which it handed on to half-civilized men from men groping in the dim light of barbarous fancy. This is the true key to the ethic of the Atonement; and Mr. Gladstone might even in his old age,

with his elasticity and his conscientiousness, have learned to use the key if only he had sought the knowledge which gives it, or at least if he were further under some practical pressure to use it. But he remains steeped in scholastic theology and in the doctrine of the Dark and Middle Ages, leaving the lore of modern science carefully alone. If he would but study such works as Dr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, or Mr. Frazer's *Golden Bough*, or even Dr. Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, or the accommodating discourses of Professor Max Müller, he would get more light on the beliefs of his lifetime than he can from all the volumes of the portentous theological library he has collected at Hawarden. Apparently it is too late: he has been too long a politician and theologian to be able now to turn anthropologist. Happy in his end in many ways, he is hardly so as regards his latest propaganda. His philosophical sun sets, as it rose, in cloud.

MR. GLADSTONE ON BUTLER.

(1896.)

I.

It is an odd turn of destiny that brings up Mr. Gladstone as the expounder and defender of Butler. However complete be the logical failure of the Bishop, it is certain that he is the most comprehensive of Christian dialecticians; the most judicial in his manner and, save for his vast assumptions, in his habit of mind; the least wordy and on the whole the most candid-seeming. In other words, he is almost the typical opposite of Mr. Gladstone as a religious reasoner. For while a just critic will always recognize in the latter a sincere concern for truth and righteousness, as he wants them to be, no one save his partizans has ever credited him with either the scientific manner or the scientific mind—the attributes which in any inquirer serve in advance to win a critical outsider's faith in his candour. And, indeed, it is probably the very difference in their spirits that brings such a disciple to such a master. To Mr. Gladstone, so long driven hither and thither by unforeseen gales of politics, painfully educated into something like rationalism in public action by the battle of life, and inwardly conscious of the value of a coherent method, there must be something sustaining and comforting in Butler's measured way of surveying the ground and laying the plan of battle between what men call belief

and unbelief. There are always plenty of those who may be described as the perorative defenders of the faith. Much less numerous are they who have intelligence enough to see in part the rational force of any critical attack on their creed, and to frame a tolerably reasonable answer. But few indeed are they who can frame such an answer as shall do more than give the already convinced a semblance of reason for their conviction, to the extent of sallying beyond the walls of faith to drive back some way the attacking force. Such a measure of success was the rare fortune of Butler. In the long wrestle between reason and traditionalism, which has been going on since as before his day, only one other English writer has even temporarily won the same apparent advantage. That was Paley. But though Paley is, or was till quite recently, retained as a handbook of clerical training in our universities, while Butler, as Mr. Gladstone complains, has there been set aside, it will hardly be disputed that Paley's success has long been utterly undone, while Butler's remains at least memorable enough, and alluring enough, to make it really worth Mr. Gladstone's while, as the zealous champion of the waning faith of Christendom, to re-edit and re-expound him.

Never a great logician, Mr. Gladstone is certainly a great tactician in the warfare of popular persuasion. His repeated triumphs after defeat at the polls will prove this to every close observer. He has a fine instinct, if not for the truth in a controversy, at least for the line of argument that will carry votes, and these not corrupt votes either, but those of men of fair moral sense at a certain stage of culture. He knows that, while all forms of religious belief have in his day been eaten into by the corrosion of scientific criticism, it holds good now as always that a vague Theism, a habit of surmising an unseen Power which must needs be

personified, tends to survive for some time the downfall of all the more concrete dogmas. And to this immemorial bias in the average man—the bias which framed the Deism so-called of last century and the Theism so-called of this, the bias which may be generically described as that of Godism, since it underlies alike polytheism, monotheism, Deism, Christianity, and every other religion, including even Buddhism—to this bias Mr. Gladstone addresses himself in this century with the persuasions which Butler held out to it in the last. His well-trained instinct for "what pays" in controversy rarely errs far. As Mr. Benn lately noted of him in the *Academy*, he will insist loudly that it is another man's duty to answer a hostile criticism, while steadily ignoring one which corners himself. He entirely ignored one by Mr. Benn. He gave an ostentatious answer to an old anti-Christian argument of Mrs. Besant's, choosing his time when Mrs. Besant no longer held a strong critical position; but the cool criticism which Bradlaugh passed on his Biblical apologetics he has ignored, and will continue to ignore, because it is unanswerable. In moods of irritation he grappled with Huxley; and though he had the luck to convict his antagonist of one bad blunder—which the latter, with congenial strategy, took care never to acknowledge—he knew too well how the balance of the battle lay to republish those disputations as a lasting contribution to the defence of the faith. He has chosen, as a possibly last way of weightily assisting the cause he has at heart, to re-edit and vindicate one of the astutest practical pleas ever made for it; rightly reasoning that the tactic which worked well a century ago, when primary Christian apologetics failed against primary scholarly criticism, may work well now, when a more skilled scholarly defence is breaking down before a more continuous scholarly attack. And I would not be understood to

speak in the least disrespectfully of the aspiration which moves the veteran disputant thus to give the whole strength of his closing years to the defence of his cherished creed. The desire would indeed be more impressive if it were not so often masked under the parade of a belief that Christianity is triumphant, and needs no defence. But that is part of the inveterate *finesse* of the man of affairs; and the aspiration itself remains high and seemly. It is a very different thing from the calculated stratagem of Mr. Balfour's plea for unreason in religion. It is in fact a species of chivalrous idealism of which none of Mr. Gladstone's political rivals has ever shown a tincture—an idealism which in the main really makes for truth, because it so constantly stimulates sincere inquiry.

II.

The merit of the argument, the force of the defence of Butler's *Analogy* against modern criticism, is of course another question. It is hard for one on the opposite side to say what would have been the best way of reviving Butler's argument in these days; but it is harder to believe that Mr. Gladstone's policy of panegyric is the most persuasive one. Barring a few detached corrections, he stands to Butler's argumentation as a whole; and though at times he seems to see how far it is, in detail, from meeting modern criticism, yet, instead of merely taking Butler's method and putting the whole case anew for modern readers, he simply extols Butler's treatise as it stands. Not content with praising the method of the *Analogy*, he praises the treatise for candour and courage. Now, for a critical modern reader, the method of the *Analogy* is simply a method of special pleading, the method of a skilful

man with a brief. The pleader is indeed much more methodical and wary than the average performer; he has taken much time and thought to arrange his materials; but he remains a special pleader. He talks like a judge: but it is a judge with his mind made up in advance. This being so, the critical reader cannot very well have Mr. Gladstone's sense of Butler's candour. Butler does not strike a rationalist to-day as at all candid in essentials: he is indeed always temperate and ratiocinative in his manner: he almost never blusters; and when he employs mere rhetoric it is sober rhetoric; but when we examine his way of dealing with hostile arguments we find either a fixed incapacity or a determined refusal to see their full force. As I have said, he is not candid: he is only candid-seeming. And the defect is the source of the logical frailty of the treatise as a whole, even as the semblance of fairness is the source of its attraction. Candour in discussion is not only a grace in the eyes of the listener: it is an immense help to the reasoner, inasmuch as it may save him from a hundred inconsistencies. If disputants in general only cared loyally for truth rather than for self-satisfaction, they would really argue much more logically and more successfully. Butler, so far from securing himself this advantage, goes near to destroy his own case by arguing each point separately in forensic fashion, instead of squarely asking himself at each proposition whether he ought to make it, having regard to his feeling on other points.

For instance, in his opening chapter—individually one of his weakest—he goes about to prove not only the likelihood of a future life, but the extreme unlikelihood of death being a cessation of personality. Now, no really candid reasoner would take that line. Even the general run of Christians see so little rational likelihood of a continuance of mental life after death that, in

their ignorance of the history of religion before theirs began, they are wont to credit their founder with bringing "immortality to light"; besides habitually grounding the doctrine of resurrection on the alleged historical fact of *his* resurrection. If there be such a likelihood as Butler alleges from "the reason of the thing," and from the "analogy of Nature," that death is only a transition from one form of existence to another; if there be, as he says, absolutely "no probability" to the eye of common sense that living beings will ever cease to be so, whence all the Christian excitement about the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ? The truth is, Butler has here assumed a confidence which is belied by the rest of his own argument. When he comes to deal with the case of Christian revelation in general, he expressly argues—with a confusion of mind which approaches the comic—that it is not at all perplexing that revelation should be perplexing: that, in short, we ought to expect that revelation will not be what we expect. Here is the due provision for the defence of the orthodox doctrine of immortality, as of every other. But, planning his argument forensically, Butler had chosen to set out with the vital proposition of a future life, assuming that, this once secured, he could safely lead his readers step by step over the rest of the ground. The doctrine of the future life must be firmly made out in order to give the preliminary foothold. Accordingly, Butler "bluffs" the general sense as it has never been bluffed in this argument before or since, professing to see no difficulty at all where all thoughtful and unprejudiced people have always seen an enormous difficulty. One of his main arguments is that, since we can lose some of our limbs and organs without dying, we are to "conclude certainly that our gross organized bodies.....*are no part of ourselves.*" Now, Butler knew perfectly well that there

are *some* organs of which men cannot survive the loss: even in his day it had been often surmised that the brain was the main organ of thought; and it was already well known that injuries to the brain often affect the mental powers. He shows he knows this when he says that,

"after all, the relation which a person bears to those parts of his body to which he is the most nearly related—what does it appear to amount to but this, that the living agent and those parts of the body mutually affect each other? And the same thing, the same thing in kind, though not in degree, may be said of *all* foreign matter which gives us ideas, and which we have any power over."

The last sentence is one of the ingenuities which mark Butler's superiority to most other religious apologists, but, like all his main arguments, it breaks down on analysis. A man's intense thought may to some extent affect the structure of his brain; but a very slight operation on his brain by a falling stone may profoundly affect his thinking faculty. On the other hand, a man may destroy a flower, or an insect, or an animal, by a pinch or a slight blow, while these living things affect him in the process hardly at all, even transiently. Where is the identity here "in kind" any more than in degree? On Butler's argument, since a tree may lose its limb without ceasing to live, the limb is no part of the tree; and when the tree is cut down and burnt there is "no presumption whatever" that the "living power" of the tree has ceased. He meets this objection by saying that plants lack "the power of perception and of action, which is the only thing we are inquiring about the continuance of." As a matter of fact, plants *have* the power "of perception and of action"; but we may waive this issue and meet the sophist on his own ground. He is committed to granting that with the death of the plant there is an end of all the plant's

living processes. Then, the man's body being "foreign matter," either we must say that *(a)* with the loss of his eyes (which Butler decides to be optical instruments in the same sense as microscopes are) there is an end of the power of seeing, or we must assume that *(b)* every bodily function goes on for the "living agent" after death as before. That is to say, the soul eats food, drinks fluid, excretes, and has illnesses—a proposition on which even Butler would not venture. But if we turn to the other horn of the dilemma, and say that while the bodily functions pass away the "living agent" remains, then the functions of reason and memory go by the board with the rest, for in our experience they depend on the continuance of the brain, just as does breathing on the continuance of one or both lungs. The apologist may, if he pleases, argue that we have really no knowledge as to the cessation of individual consciousness with death. That is a safe negative position; but it is an extremely different one from the affirmative position that there is "no ground to think" that the destruction of the body is the destruction of the personality, and that there is "a presumption" to the contrary. Butler had much better have taken the full primeval license of surmising that plants too have immortal souls, as he was actually willing to assume in the case of animals.

Perhaps the most damaging instance of his forensic lack of candour is the argument that

> "there are instances of *mortal diseases which do not at all affect our present intellectual powers;* and this affords a presumption that those diseases will not destroy these present powers..... Instances of mortal disease not impairing our present reflecting powers *evidently turn our thoughts even from imagining such diseases ever to be the destruction of them.*"

Observe, he had already admitted that "the living agent and the [most vital] parts of the body mutually

affect each other." Now we are told that in a mortal disease there is no mutuality of effect whatever. Presumably the Bishop set out to assert merely that at certain stages of a mortal disease a man may remain quite capable of reasoning. This is true ; as it is true that at certain stages of consumption he is quite capable of breathing, and that a tree partly hacked is still capable of budding—all of which facts give no hint of immortality. Accordingly the apologist had to pass beyond the truth into an assertion which is nakedly untrue ; for there is no instance whatever of a man in the later stages of a mortal disease having his mental powers entirely unaffected. When the mental powers remain *relatively* vigorous, being the last to weaken and to disappear, the reasonable inference is simply that the disease attacked other organs than the brain, which only gave way through their collapse. On the other hand, on Butler's own principle, every instance of a *brain* disease destroying a man's judgment and memory while he retains the use of his limbs and digestion, is a very strong ground for a presumption that when the brain is gone, personality is gone. Butler's sophistry has recoiled on himself. After following his argument to the end, the rationalist reader sees more clearly than ever that there is "no ground to think" that personality survives death. Butler's audacious appeal to us to "leave off the delusive custom of substituting imagination in the room of experience," and to "confine ourselves to what we do know and understand," finally figures for us as something of a farce. It is directly after that appeal that he goes on to suggest that "*when* we go out of this world we may pass into new scenes, and a new state of life and action, just as naturally as we came into the present. And this new state may naturally be a social one." And so on. The man who could write this cannot have attached any sincere

meaning to his own protest against "the delusive custom of substituting imagination in the room of experience," and his profession to stand upon "what we do know and understand."

And when the Bishop is thus seen to be uncandid, it is not easy to see how he can be credited with any high degree of courage in respect of particular parts of his argument. Mr. Gladstone credits him with that virtue on various grounds, the first of which is his proposition that brutes may have a future life and development. Now, that argument was obviously forced on Butler by the nature of his thesis as to human immortality. That would at once go to pieces if he did not assume that animals might be immortal; for they are on his theory "living agents," employing their bodies as instruments. As we have seen, indeed, his argument finally requires the surmise that plants have a future life, and from this surmise he recoils. As to the alleged "boldness" of his suggestion "that the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood," here again we must answer that that is an essential part of Butler's main thesis, which without that stipulation would collapse. Mr. Gladstone in bestowing his praise seems to forget what the *Analogy* sets out to maintain. If there is any courage in the case, it is in the resort to the main thesis that the "scheme" of revelation is analogous to the "scheme" of nature. Since the whole scheme of Nature is not understood, it lies in the terms of the theorem that the "whole scheme of Scripture" is not yet understood.

But it is needless to pursue this issue further. We can easily understand how to Mr. Gladstone Butler seems candid and courageous. He was so, as a Christian apologist, relatively to Mr. Gladstone. He was more candid in so far as he admitted what Mr. Gladstone will not frankly admit, though it is still truer

to-day than it was in Butler's day, that a multitude of educated men are satisfied of the incredibility of the Christian religion. Butler lived in the middle of a fashionable movement of unbelief, and in order to make any impression on that movement he had to acknowledge the existence of the religious difficulties to which it called attention, and to meet these difficulties in a temperate if austere fashion. And to do this he had to resort to an argument which, though it dated from the early Christian ages in its technical form, and is always extremely popular in its cruder form, had seemed much too secular and unsanctified, not to say too unpriestly, for the previous defenders of the faith in England. Butler, in fact, *was* in his way a bold tactician. And these ways are not naturally Mr. Gladstone's ways. His attitude to rationalism through the greater part of his life was one of disgusted aloofness, a seeking to ignore it as a passing plague. To this day, he inclines rather to affirm a "mystery of faith" with the angry arrogance of a priest than to avow ignorance and diffidence with the sombre air of Butler. When he wrote long ago on Blanco White he could not contain himself over the critical audacities of that very moderate sceptic, and raged at him as "rabid" when he dared to impugn the central doctrines of the Christian creed. And even now, in his ripe old age, Mr. Gladstone is too prepossessed and prejudiced a polemist to be capable of imitating save occasionally the restraint of Butler's method and manner.

III.

How far he is, in turn, from the spirit of scientific candour, is made rather disagreeably apparent in his extraordinary treatment of the explicit testimony of

Wilberforce's *Memoirs*, that "Pitt declared to me that Bishop Butler's work raised in his mind more doubts than it had answered." That passage is derived from "conversational memoranda" furnished by friends of Wilberforce to the editors of the *Memoirs*. And inasmuch as there is found in Wilberforce's own diary the entry: "Pitt called, and commended Butler's *Analogy*: resolved to write to him and discover to him what I am occupied about"—Mr. Gladstone holds himself entitled to come to the conclusion that the latter entry is trustworthy and the former "not entitled to credit." He affirms that the two passages are "of a directly opposite tenour." Now, it is only his own prepossession that can make them seem so. In the first place, we have strong independent testimony as to Pitt's heterodoxy. His niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, being told of the unctuous account given in Gifford's [pseudonymous] *Life* of the religiosity of Pitt on his deathbed, protested indignantly that it was "all a lie." "What," she asked, "should Mr. Pitt make such a speech for, who never went to church in his life? Nothing prevented his going to church when he was at Walmer; but he never even talked about religion, and never brought it upon the carpet."* Lady Hester was indeed a flighty person; but her recollections of her uncle have always the stamp of veracity,† and in this case her evidence is peculiarly weighty. To this testimony, however, Mr. Gladstone makes no reference whatever, either not knowing it or not choosing to notice it. But even apart from that testimony, the two

* *Memoirs of the Lady Hester Stanhope*, 1845, iii., 166-167.

† Her physician, who wrote her memoirs, testifies that, "after an intimate knowledge of her ladyship's character for upwards of thirty years, he was always impressed with the highest respect for her veracity" (*Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*, 1846, vol. i., preface, p. 11).

passages in Wilberforce's *Memoirs* confirm each other for anyone who will read them with attention and with an open mind. Mr. Gladstone says that according to one passage Pitt "condemns" the book which he had previously recommended. To argue thus is to miss the whole meaning of the episode, and to ignore a main part of the very entry in the Diary to which Mr. Gladstone pins himself. Wilberforce writes that Pitt "commended Butler's *Analogy*," and then goes on: "Resolved to write to him and *discover to him what I am occupied about.*" What does the latter part of the sentence mean, in the light of the context? Clearly, that Wilberforce had *not*, in the first mentioned conversation, asked Pitt for help about the religious troubles which were pressing themselves upon him. Then Pitt had *not* recommended Butler as a means of clearing up religious perplexities. What had presumably happened was that Pitt had noticed a tendency in Wilberforce's thoughts towards that evangelicalism with which Pitt had notoriously no sympathy; and that he had diplomatically recommended Butler as an author likely to set up a quite unevangelical strain of thought in an intelligent man whose opinions were not already fixed. The only kind of man to whom Butler could be commended *by a believer* would be a Deist; and Wilberforce was never a Deist. Thus Wilberforce's entry in his Diary is in perfect keeping with the statement at the beginning of the disputed entry, that Pitt "*tried to reason me out of my convictions.*" This phrase Mr. Gladstone would have us absolutely reject. On his view it is not to be credited that Wilberforce ever made such a statement; and we should then have to believe that the pious Wilberforce's editors thoughtlessly let pass as Wilberforce's, on bad authority, a statement which made out an illustrious statesman to be anti-religious when he was really quite otherwise.

It is easy to see why the critic takes up such an extreme position. Mr. Gladstone has committed himself to the proposition that practical politicians, who ought, in his opinion, to be good judges of human problems on grounds of probability, are mostly believers in Christianity. It would accordingly be very awkward for him if one of the greatest of English statesmen, after expressly studying Butler's argument on probability, found it tell distinctly in favour of the unbelief against which it was directed. So the express and valid testimony of Wilberforce's *Memoirs* must be overruled by hook or crook, and Butler's book relieved of the discredit of having led Pitt in the direction of doubt. The procedure, and the reason for resorting to it, are alike characteristic. The assertion that practical politicians are mostly believers in Christianity is one of those catchpenny arguments to which Mr. Gladstone so often resorts in his religious reasonings. It is only of English politicians that the statement, such as it is, can be made with any plausibility. It is certainly not true of the politicians of France, who have quite as much occasion to study "probability" as any. It is not true of Lincoln, of Franklin, of Washington, of Jefferson, of Frederick the Great, of Danton, of Bolingbroke, of Gambetta. And as regards the average run of English politicians and statesmen, how amazingly askew, how derisory is the plea! Among Mr. Gladstone's most believing Christian colleagues in politics were Lord Selborne, Mr. Bright, and the Duke of Argyll, all three of whom went dead against him on Home Rule, the latter in particular attacking him as an unscrupulous falsifier of history and perverter of political issues. At the same time Mr. Gladstone had among his most trusted and qualified assistants Mr. Morley and Mr. Bryce, rationalists both. Mr. Bradlaugh was on the same side. It is the political training, he tells us by

implication, that qualifies men to take a sound view of religion. But the three most pronounced believers of his former political company are finally found, by his own showing, grievously astray in their very politics. What, then, becomes of their qualification to judge of the problems of religion; and what is the value of their verdict? To this cruel quandary comes the last champion of the *Analogy*.

IV.

But let us not forget, over the side issues which Mr. Gladstone multiplies, to estimate his defence of Butler in its main aspects. His work certainly does not easily lend itself to such an estimate. It has no unity, no proper proportion, no synthesis; and it avowedly declines to go behind Butler's polemic to deal with the question which Butler begged, but which later critics have pressingly raised as against his theorem—the question of Theism itself. While professing to rebut the main criticisms passed upon Butler, Mr. Gladstone will not directly grapple with the criticism which charges Butler's Theism with unreason. He contents himself with trying to score hits against the critics on points within Butler's argument. Certainly he had some good chances. Among the critics he deals with are Mr. Bagehot, Miss Hennell, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Mr. Maurice, Mr. Pattison, and Mr. Goldwin Smith, inexact reasoners nearly all—for even Pattison in this case takes up a fantastic position, eulogizing the *Analogy* for its logical texture, but obscurely discrediting it as a text-book. But in at least one capital instance Mr. Gladstone chooses to defend Butler against criticism where Butler is indefensible; and to note this is to get one broad view of the fallacious position of the Bishop and his disciple.

Bagehot had justly said of the main argument of the *Analogy* that it "may be used in the defence of any revelation, the Mohammedan as well as the Christian"; and Mr. Gladstone consents to grapple with the objection, as thus :—

"The Koran, then, presents itself, *according to Butler's method*, at the bar of reason for scrutiny, inasmuch as reason is the judge both of the proofs of the religion and even of its character. When the proofs of the Gospel are opened we find that it [what?] alleges, taken roughly: (1) Prophecy, (2) Miracle, (3) History, (4) Moral Adaptation. And of these the first two appear especially to have been vital to its first acceptance. But when we turn to Mohammedanism, these two great subjects are presented to us as an absolute blank. If we come to the third, we find anterior *history in the narrative of the Old Testament* leading up to Christianity, but having no point of contact whatever with Mohammedanism. If we pass to posterior records, we find that the history of Christianity, down to the time when it had conclusively established its hold on the greatest races and ruling intellects of the world, was a history of suasion. But the history of Mohammedanism, as a religion systematically propagated by violence and bloodshed, seems to renounce the appeal to reasoning altogether, and to make the whole inquiry ridiculous. It is hardly necessary after this to enter on the question of moral adaptation, or an efficacious remedy for the disease of human nature."

Let us test this reasoning, first on its merits, secondly in respect of its consistency with Butler's professed method. We are told (1) that Christianity rested on Prophecy and Miracle, and that Mohammedanism did not. Then Mohammedanism succeeded without claims which were essential to the success of Christianity—claims which we, using the reason that is "judge both of the proofs of religion and even of its character," consider to have been of the nature of hallucinations. Then Islam, *so far*, is found to have shown signs of a kind of vigour and inherent attraction which Christianity never had.

We are next told (2) that "anterior history *in the narrative of the Old Testament*" leads up to Christianity,

but not to Mohammedanism. As a matter of fact, there is a huge historic interval between the Old Testament and the New ; but we may let that pass. What then? By what right do Butler and his disciple assume that a true revelation must needs have been led up to by the Old Testament? What led up to that? Is not that history itself involved in the dispute? This argument is either decisive or nugatory. If it be valid at all, there can be no need of any other plea. The use of others shows that it is not felt to be decisive. In reality, seeing that the Old Testament is part of the matter under debate, the plea is a mere flourish of words, an attempt to throw dust in the reader's eyes.

So we pass to (3) the argument from the manner of propagation of the two creeds. Christianity got on for some centuries, we are told, by mere suasion. Then is this a mark of a true revelation? If so, Buddhism is a true revelation, for that made way by mere suasion. Yet Mr. Gladstone does not accept Buddhism ; and Butler never thought of looking for another creed peacefully propagated. Christianity, on the other hand, resorted to force as soon as it could, as soon as it was a State religion. Then does it not fall into the same category with Mohammedanism, which also did not at the outset resort to force, because at the outset it could not? Is the divinity of Christianity proved by its having merely taken longer to reach the stage of violence and bloodshed? And if its initial bloodlessness be a sign of divinity, what about the Deistic movement itself, which never resorted to violence, but which Butler set himself to oppose? Again, if the renouncing of the appeal to reason be a sign of a false religion, what is to be made of the repeated renunciation of that appeal by Christianity? Jesus taught that babes and sucklings were fitting recipients of his creed ; and he promised fearful curses on all cities which did not receive his

disciples. Where is the appeal to reason in that method, any more than in Mohammed's? The appeal of the early Christian teachers is in ten cases to faith and fear for once that it is laid to reason. Indeed, it would be hard to find any straightforward appeal to reason in patristic literature. Reason was often appealed to as discrediting the Pagan faiths; but the Christian faith was normally presented as above reason. For the rest, we know that its early "suasion" consisted largely in almsgiving to the poor, and still more largely in promising remission of sins to a corrupt population.

We come finally to (4) the argument from Moral Adaptation, which Mr. Gladstone says it is "hardly necessary" to enter on, in the case of Mohammedanism. But why not? Islam must have been morally adapted to its environment, or it could never have arisen. Mr. Gladstone talks in the old way about its being propagated by the sword, evading in the old way the query put by Carlyle, How was it able to get its sword? Is it suggested that any one man in any age may set agoing any creed whatever by simple violence, he conquering some, they conquering more, and so on? I grant that the ordinary view of the rise of Mohammedanism is wrong, that the military campaign helped on the faith rather than the faith the campaign. But in an exactly analogous way Christianity was embraced by rulers because of its political convenience, and if we deny moral adaptation to Mohammedanism, we must equally deny it to Christism. Obviously Mohammedanism, once founded, must have made a strong moral impression, else it could never have had the success it met with; and it certainly did as much in its day of power to cure "the disease of human nature" as Christianity in itself ever did in the ages of faith, or has done since as a mere creed, apart from other forces. For the rest, if the phenomenon of the triumph of Islam were to

be pronounced upon as Christians have always pronounced upon that of the (exaggerated) spread of their own faith, it would have to be described as miraculous in a higher degree, inasmuch as it overran more than half of Christendom with much greater rapidity than Christianity had overrun Paganism. The argument from "Moral Adaptation," in fact, would prove the supernaturalness of every creed that ever succeeded, from Bacchism and Buddhism to the Deism of last century and the Mormonism of this.

Mr. Gladstone, finally, gives away his own case when he proceeds to confess that if Butler's argument "is available for religions other than our own it can only be made available for them in so far as they are true." So be it. And since that point admittedly needs to be proved separately and preliminarily for religions in general, it must be so proved for Christianity; and Butler's argument here breaks down once for all. It is strange that an experienced debater should so lose himself in fallacy.

How utterly inconsistent is the Butlerian-Gladstonian argument with itself, can perhaps be still better seen by comparing the above deliverance of Mr. Gladstone on Mohammedanism with his remarks in the same chapter* on Judaism. We have seen him denouncing Islam as having been propagated by violence and bloodshed. But when he comes to deal with Miss Hennell he has to meet the objection that under an alleged divine command Judaism itself was propagated by violence and bloodshed. So we are informed with regard to the "terrible penalty on Canaan" that such proceedings are acts

"which may not in their whole grounds be comprehensible by us, *but which it would be the extreme of audacity on our part to condemn*.....There can be no interruption of the moral law in the

* Cp. pp. 28-29 and 40-41 (cheap edition).

Divine government. Instances there may be which we cannot demonstrate to be in conformity with it; *but on these we are to suspend our judgment* for the very sufficient reason that *our ignorance prevents us from giving a full and perfect account of any one thing whatever.*"

What is this but the language of the unscrupulous Moslem, justifying the spread of his faith by the sword? How can Mr. Gladstone come to us pretending to test religion by reason, when at the first call for the test in the case of his own creed he burkes it in the name of divine authority? If it be audacious for us to condemn acts which we are told were done by God's command, how dare he condemn acts which also were said to be done by God's command? If a Moslem mollah should tell him that it is the extreme of audacity on his part to condemn the methods of God's prophet, what decently consistent answer could he make? And if our ignorance "prevents us from giving a full and perfect account of any one thing whatever," what business has he to pass judgment on the right or wrong of Moslem methods?

We have here applied one of the crucial tests which destroy Butler's case for every logical reader. But let us take another application. Butler, Mr. Gladstone tells us,* "treats morality as immutable, and emphatically holds that it is not based on the mere consequences of acts; that moral fitness resides in them of themselves; and that the will of God is thereby determined." But only four pages earlier we were told that, while reason is judge of the morality of what is offered to us as revelation, "the case is different with external action; 'for instance, taking away the property or life of any': the title to hold these proceeding from the divine will, and being revocable by those [?] who gave them. In these cases actions which without command would be

* P. 40.

immoral, *cease to bear that character when commanded.*" So that, to justify a particular theft or murder, a man has only to say that God commanded him to commit it. But neither Bishop Butler nor Mr. Gladstone would for a moment accept that plea from a thief or a murderer in his own day. It comes to this, then, that any act narrated in the Hebrew Scriptures as done by God's command is to be regarded as justified by the assertion; and when an unknown Hebrew writer of antiquity says that somebody once said that God commanded a particular act, it is to be believed that God did so, though no modern man whatever, be he of what eminence or credit soever, would be listened to for a moment should he make a similar assertion. After all this endorsation of the claims of a barbaric Scripture to the most abject credence, Mr. Gladstone rebukes Miss Hennell for saying that in Butler's doctrine Nature suggests "a Father best pleased with uninquiring filial love." "There is not a word," says Mr. Gladstone, "to this effect in the works of Butler. They do not contain a single highly-coloured passage in favour of authority, and their spirit throughout is surely favourable to intelligent and unflinching scrutiny." At this point argument with Mr. Gladstone ceases to be a reasonable activity. Speaking for and citing Butler, he insists in one breath on humble suspension of judgment wherever scrutiny leads to a hostile view of a Hebrew Scripture; and in the next he tells us that Butler and he are all for unflinching scrutiny. *Solvuntur tabulæ.*

Common-sense as well as charity leads us to surmise that it is by reason of sheer failure of perception that Mr. Gladstone falls into these sad confusions. A Sunday-school teacher might be supposed capable of avoiding such stumbles; and no man can conceivably commit them with his eyes open to the spectacle he presents. We need not hesitate, then, to set down to

failure of comprehension the answer he offers to Hume's argument on future retribution, cited by Mr. Stephen as destroying Butler's. Mr. Gladstone puts it* thus :—

"Hume asks if there are marks of distributive justice in the world. If you reply that there are, then, he contends, you have nothing more to expect. If there are not, you have no groundwork of divine justice to argue from. But further, 'If you say that the justice of the Gods, at present, exerts itself in part, but not to its full extent, I answer that you have no reason to give it any particular extent, but only so far as you see it at present exert itself.'"

"From the meshes of so poor a dilemma," cries Mr. Gladstone, "the weakest fly might escape." And this is how he supposes himself to buzz his way out :—

"We have a life, not uniform and homogeneous throughout, but progressive. The several parts of this life exhibit to us a development; and this development represents to us a plan and a purpose. But, while it is governed by a scheme, imperfectly developed it is true, but still a scheme, of distributive justice combined with intelligence, the plan is seen to be incomplete."

And we are to infer that, being incomplete, it is likely to be completed. As thus :—

"Let us suppose a case of commonplace occurrence. A maker of engines is engaged in constructing a complicated machine. While he is at work, the dinner hour has struck, and he departs for his meal. During his absence a visitor arrives, sees the work in its unfinished state, and *recognizes its plan and purpose.* Will not this visitor presume, will not nature and reason oblige him to presume, that the workman means to return, and to finish the task he has in hand?"

Our confident fly, it will be seen, is buzzing away against the glass of the argument whose nature he does not realize, supposing himself to be making famous progress. Let us meet Mr. Gladstone on the plane of his all too simple-minded illustration. To make it work for an instant he has to assume (1) that he knows he is

* P. 53.

looking at an unfinished machine, (2) that he knows the workman is at dinner. But an unfinished machine is recognizable as such by an outsider only from a previous knowledge of other machines, finished or unfinished. Then where did Mr. Gladstone get his comparative knowledge of cosmo-ethical machines? And how did he ascertain that Omnipotence rests, whether for dinner or for fun, and resumes work? He has simply begged the question. It is not so childishly easy a matter to evade a dilemma framed by Hume. The childishness is usually found to lie with the would-be fugitive. Mr. Gladstone jumps from the question of "distributive justice" to that of personal development—an utterly different problem.

"Childhood and boyhood," he writes, "raise a presumption of youth and manhood to complete them. And as the earlier stages of life raise a presumption of the later stages to complete them, so life as a whole, by virtue of the constructive features it presents, raises a presumption of its continuance hereafter in order that the work which has been visibly begun may be proceeded with, and may reach its integration."

What has all this to do with "distributive justice"? And what, in any case, is meant by "life as a whole"? Is it individual life? Then where is the presumption, from dwindling and weakening old age, from the obvious going down hill to dissolution, that the next stage is up hill, expansion, rejuvenescence? Where, again, is the evidence of an "incomplete scheme" of distributive justice in the life of the average man? Do not many men suffer grievously and long who have done little ill, and many prosper signally who have done little but ill? The idea seems to be that since some knaves get hanged God must mean to hang all; and that since Lazarus is starved and Dives glutted in this sphere, God must mean to fatten Lazarus and sweat Dives in another. It

is all the same whether justice is or is not done in this life ; either way there is to be a "presumption" that it will be done hereafter. If good men's legs are broken here, it must be that God means so to mend them that they shall be better than new ; and if the wicked man flourish like a green bay tree it must be that God, for private reasons, chooses to let him, and is waiting for him beyond the Styx with a birch rod, prepared from all eternity. We are to presume this because sometimes there is a clear semblance of caning going on before the river is reached, as when Herod dies of a nasty complaint, and Louis Napoleon suffers badly from gravel, and Mr. Jabez Balfour is after all brought from South America. As if the gravel had not also tortured regiments of blameless men, and cancer had not slowly devoured a million of lovable women, and false witness had never brought the innocent to the gallows, and Mr. Balfour's victims had not suffered, hundreds of them, a harder fate than his.

Alas, alas, that this childlike anthropomorphism of the antique world should be offered to thinking men at this time of day as a shield to the fatal fork of Hume—at this time of day, when the very notion of future justice has become for all but the intellectually barbarian and juvenile an ideal to be recoiled from. Who wants to see the wicked punished, whether for ever, as the customary pietist says they will be, or only for certain centuries, as Mr. Gladstone seems to modify the calculation ? Is there one of the controllers of the Clarendon Press who does not feel that the future roasting of Nero is an occupation only for a Nero raised to the *n*th power, since the roaster had admittedly planned that his victim should deserve the roasting? Is there any ethical difference, for a just mind, between making Nero miserable by internal despair and making him miserable by external devils, when either way it is premised that Omnipotence had framed him to sin ?

Mr. Gladstone leaves that fundamental problem severely alone. Forced by the insensible growth of humane feeling in all directions to give up the orthodox dogma of eternal punishment for finite sin, he undertakes with his old fatal facility and vain fluency to show that the Christian Scriptures do not mean what every unprepossessed reader has always taken them to mean; and he decides that, while the righteous are assuredly immortal, the wicked are not necessarily to be punished eternally, though what will happen to them is not clear. The square question: How could men be wicked if their Creator had not meant them to be? he at all points directly or indirectly refuses to discuss. While pronouncing that the question of the origin of evil "presents to the limited powers of the human mind insurmountable barriers in the way of effectual inquiry,"* he does not scruple on the other hand to assert that, "inasmuch as evil hath been allowed to enter into the world, we are bound to suppose that it has been *for some exemplary or other sufficient purpose*";† that is, that Omnipotence may either have made some men specially bad, as the Spartans made their Helots drunk, to be a warning to the rest; or that Omnipotence wrought evil in a general way for its own satisfaction—that being the only "sufficient purpose" left stateable if we exclude the fatal formula "that good might come." At the same time, our theologian repeats the irrational Christian formula, that while free-will "works at a presumptive disadvantage owing to the degeneracy of nature through sin," yet "under the Christian scheme.....its infirmities are repaired, and the obstacles to its action neutralized, by a Divine aid, *open without stint to those who ask it.*" That is, God arranged the Christian hocus-pocus to make men capable of being good, without

* P. 267. † P. 263.

arranging that all men should be capable of believing in a God who could make such an arrangement.

Finally, faced by the plain proposition that man, if really governed by an omnipotent Being, is a puppet, Mr. Gladstone takes the old line of brazenly insisting* that, as Omnipotence can do all things, it can make "an originating agent." Thus can the defender of the faith always find final refuge in hardy absurdity. On Mr. Gladstone's principle, Omnipotence can make two hills without an intervening valley, can make a square triangle, and can make $2+2=11$, being capable, to start with, of setting up an infinite number of "agents" who are not subject to it, while yet itself always exercising the whole power of all possible agents. Omnipotence, in fact, includes the power to be Not Omnipotent. When a dialectician who thus openly prostitutes the very faculty of reason, proceeds to cast infamy on those who refuse to do so, we know what his verdicts are worth. With his inveterate resort to aspersion where he cannot meet argument, Mr. Gladstone declares† that Holbach employed the doctrine of Determinism as "a twin engine for the destruction of all that is best in manhood." It would seem that, knowing himself to be regarded by many thousands of his fellow Christians as an unscrupulous self-seeker and a hardened prevaricator; virtually confessing himself to have been guilty of much innocent blood; habitually protesting that multitudes of those who believe with him have wrought and are working iniquity, Mr. Gladstone can yet talk himself at any moment into a Christian self-complacency worthy of the most ignorant Catholic peasant, and can suppose himself to dispose of the most damaging philosophical opposition by blackening his opponents.

* P. 276. † P. 268.

The spectacle sets one musing on the strangeness of the ideals and the motives which sway some men's energies. Mr. Gladstone throughout his life, as a politician, has been detested and resisted by myriads of men who are presumably about as devout in their Christian faith as he. The great majority of the priests of his own Church distrust and denounce him in respect of the political activities which have been the main work of his life. His leading political opponent of recent years is occupied like himself in trying to show that it is only by believing in the Christian religion that mankind can properly manage its affairs. All the while the two have used their whole political energies to frustrate each other's policy, each declaring the other to be an agent of evil; and all the while most of the men who reject as hollow the religious reasonings of both are found helping Mr. Gladstone to do what they hold with him to be just. And after it all, after politically wrangling all his life with Christians, Mr. Gladstone finds his happiness in undertaking to make out that those who reject his creed are destroyers of "all that is best in manhood," the said best being, by implication, conserved by those whose politics he has been constantly arraigning as pernicious and perverse. To this end he strenuously refurbishes the dusty apparatus of Butler's *Analogy*. And yet in the very act he acknowledges* that it is "indeed indisputable" that the argument of Butler, "faithfully adjusted as it was to the needs of his own day, is inadequate to the needs of ours"!

V.

Why then was it so laboriously revived? We must go back to our preliminary surmise, and conclude that Mr. Gladstone, knowing he cannot confute the modern

* P. 41.

rationalist, yet counts on comforting the Irrationalist (who is already being so sedulously ministered-to by one leader of the rival political party), and further on whipping-up to a hebdomadal activity the torpid Trinitarian who has got into the habit of shirking church. After all, that is somewhat the fashion in which the triumphs of parties have been effected in Mr. Gladstone's secular experience. The number of Liberals and Tories, to the statistical eye, remains pretty much the same; but now one and now the other party "organizes," excites its half-hearted hangers-on to a spell of enthusiasm, and drags to every poll certain hundreds who would fain be on their bicycles elsewhere; so that the balance is more or less turned, and the relative rise and fall of a few thousands of votes throughout the country puts one party in the parliamentary nadir and the other at the zenith. So—by heartening-up dispirited sentimentalists, conscious that they "cannot argue," and by rousing to orthodox self-assertion the erstwhile indifferent man of the world, who remembers his Creator in the days of his gout—the winding of Butler's ancient horn may haply secure to faith, for the time being, the semblance of a majority of a hundred and fifty in the reviews.

It may very well be so; and it would be malignant to feel eager that the aged captain, leaning heavily on his spear at the close of the day, should not have the comfort of fancying that the immeasurable strife is for the moment rolling the way he would like. But does not even Mr. Gladstone at times, in the pauses of his breathless polemic, hear sounding in his theological ear, from the side of his foes, a saying he once gave out in another contest: *Time is on our side?*

For that it verily is, he has himself as good as avowed. Butler's argument *is* "inadequate to the needs" of the nineteenth century. And it is so because

it is logically inept save as an artifice to dazzle into one fallacy men who are already entangled in another. It is singular, indeed, that the central contradiction of Butler's argument has been so little noted. Critics have justly pointed out that it tells as much in favour of any other religion, or of simple Atheism, as of Christianity; but they have not as a rule noted how constantly it is in a state of shuffle from one to another of two contradictory positions. The major thesis is that we "ought to expect" in Revelation the perplexities which we find in Nature, regarded as the work of a Good Omnipotence. Then Christianity is proved a divine Revelation by its perplexities. But inasmuch as it is so simple a matter to frame religions stuffed with perplexities, the reasoner must instantly go about to show that after all Nature is not perplexing, and neither is Christianity. There is "not too much difficulty, but just difficulty enough" in Christianity; whereas in other religions the quantity of difficulty is either too small or too large. Christianity alone is so carefully flavoured with difficulties that they end by being proofs that the "Author of Nature" measured them out on his own peculiar principles. To this queer proposition the answer of reason to-day, if any answer be necessary, is very simple. It is that the "difficulties" of Nature are difficulties in an absolutely different sense from that which holds of those of the Christian sacred books. To the eye of the true student, the difficulties of Nature are solely those of tracing causation beyond a certain point. Apart from that, Nature sets up no perplexity, its laws being found, where known, to be absolutely uniform.

Of course, if the onlooker chooses to impute moral (that is, human) purpose and a Personal (that is, human) Ruler to Nature, he lands himself at once in difficulties without end; but the rational onlooker to-day

is not going to make an absurd assumption in order to give Christians an excuse for affirming further absurdities. He takes Nature as he finds it, and seeks for its laws; and he does the same thing with Christianity. And it cannot be too plainly declared that for the rational student to-day *Christianity has no special difficulties whatever.* That is to say, he sees in it a perfectly intelligible process of hierological growth, on the bases of previous creeds. There is no "difficulty" for him in a preposterous doctrine or an incredible story: he knows historically and psychologically how stories to him incredible could come to be told and believed; and how preposterous doctrines could come to be formed and accepted in a given culture-stage, and thrust by the spirit of tradition and pietism on later ages. He understands Christian history, as revised, in the light of the history of other religions. There is still some "difficulty" in settling the nature of the authorship of certain portions of the documents, by reason of the peculiar untruthfulness of the primitive religious temperament; but that is merely a difficulty of scholarship, not a moral perplexity. So the whole problem and the whole apparatus of the *Analogy* are thus, for the instructed modern intelligence, entirely irrelevant. The very principle of common-sense "probability" to which it appealed, and to which Mr. Gladstone appeals in a redundantly nugatory essay, is now seen to dismiss the whole discussion to the limbo of delusions.

As for Mr. Gladstone's strenuous efforts to revivify it, he incidentally gives us the formula which, howbeit theological in savour, serves scientifically to classify him. It is not imperfection of intelligence, he tells us, that causes difficulty about religious matters, but Corruption of the Will. It is exactly so. His "Will," his prejudice, his rooted habit of sentiment, overrules and perverts all his thinking; and leaves him once more

revealed for us as an energetic personality bent on proving that what he has always believed must be true, let reason and history say what they will. In Butler's day that argument was turned, perhaps sometimes with justice, against the fashionable Freethinking. In the corrupt and frivolous society which followed on the Restoration there may very well have been a number of men who wanted to believe Christianity untrue in order that they might have clear consciences in practising the forms of immorality which other men, believing Christianity true, habitually practised without misgiving, having the doctrine of final forgiveness to sustain them. Among the former class, and perhaps even among the latter, Butler might make converts, as much by his terse and weighted style as by his reasoning. His style, though awkward, is indeed signally impressive, having that air of being solidly freighted with sagacity and conviction, which in other matters gave such impetus to the teaching of Hobbes. Hobbes is of course by far the greater writer, as he is by far the greater thinker ; but Butler is of his literary school, being indeed almost the only religious writer who recalls him.

For us to-day, however, the moral spell is gone. We can see with perfect clearness that for the devout Berkeley and the austere Butler, as for Mr. Gladstone, the motive to belief is as completely outside of logic and veracity as the motive of the rakish young aristocrats who followed Bolingbroke. All alike begin in carnal inclination. Berkeley does not disguise the fact that he clings passionately to his evangelicalism as to a thing delicious and beloved ; and he hotly appeals to the men of science to accept the arbitrary assumptions of the faith as they make arbitrary assumptions in mathematics —thus arguing on the same strategic line as Butler ; who in his turn clung to the creed, in his more sombre

way, not so much for any neurotic joy it gave him as for its apparent social value and economic convenience, public and private. Only in general moral bias had he any real moral superiority over any of the light wits against whom he schemed: from the spirit of truth and the dry light of reason he was practically as far as they. When you foreordain your conclusions, it really makes no difference in the fact of your moral and logical perversity whether you do it because you love Jesus Christ or because you love Mary Magdalene. And it is easy to see how the stronger readers, men as moral as Butler in general, and much more so on the particular point of argumentation, found his book to be what it really is for such minds—a lead to Atheism.

Mr. Gladstone will not allow that it could ever be this, save in a transient and exceptional way.* But I have heard Christian advocates as strenuous as he admit in discussion the historical fact that the *Analogy* had a nearly equal influence for deeper doubt and for reasoning credence.† Mr. Gladstone's denials on these points, in fact, as on others, are but fresh illustrations of his maxim about the corruption of the Will: he will never admit what he does not like to think true if there be any possibility of talking round it. Hence the *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler.*

* In dealing with the statement that it had such an influence on James Mill, Mr. Gladstone (p. 55) strangely confuses the testimony in J. S. Mill's *Autobiography*. The confusion lies on the face of his text.

† Mr. Gladstone seems to know of no hostile criticism of Butler before those of Dr. Martineau and Miss Hennell. But Hazlitt had strongly impeached the *Analogy* long before, while giving high praise to the *Sermons*—which to some extent they deserve.

THE JESUS LEGEND AND THE MYTH OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

(1894.)

I.

A PECULIAR feature in current literature is the zeal of uninstructed literary men to enlighten the world on the subject of the character of Jesus of Nazareth, so called. On the face of the case, it would almost seem that the less of real study a man has given to the subject, the better qualified he feels to clear up all the problems recognized by real students in the story of the Gospels. Mr. Hall Caine, who is fruitful of popular historical romances, appropriately promises a new Life of Christ. Mr. Le Gallienne, a poet and a prose-writer of a higher order, who knows so nearly nothing about German or other commentation, announces that the German commentators have settled all the questions about the texts, and proceeds to declaim with much freedom on the "sublime figure of Christ," for the instruction of belletrists like himself. Mr. Buchanan, after writing an eloquent poem in which one of his views of Jesus is set forth, supplies a prose commentary thereon in newspaper letters, in which others of his views are set forth with even greater eloquence, and, if possible, less coherence. Of each of these writers it may be surmised that he has read Renan and Mrs. Humphry Ward, and dipped into the Gospels; of none is it safe to suppose that he has

read Strauss; of all it is safe to say that they have as little desire as capacity to make an original investigation of their subject on scientific lines. In contrast with their primeval simplicity of method, the output of the preachers, with their discourses on "The Silence of Jesus," "The Humour of Jesus," "The Socialism of Jesus," "The Individualism of Jesus," and so forth, is almost modern; the research of Mr. Gladstone on the affairs of Gadara almost scholarly; and the Christology of the three-volume novel almost critical. And at times, when one thinks of the whole wilderness of verbiage, with its rare and rocky oases, as Strauss, and its provoking mirage, as Renan, it seems vain indeed to think to get the better of "such quantities of sand." Yet an age which has seen the main cosmogonic myths of the Hebrews at last shelved with other folk-lore, albeit the rest of their very transparent historic mythology is still handled as history by professed mythologists*—such an age might be supposed capable of applying critical methods to the purport as well as to the text of the Gospels.

The first difficulty is to bring not only the orthodox but the professed investigators to see the scope of the problem. To this end it is much to find one of the authors of *Lux Mundi* going so far as to contrast the historic element of the New Testament with the historic element of the Old. Dubiously admitting, as beseems Churchmen, that when we approach the "Mosaic" history in the light of the earliest Jewish documents, as the book of Judges, we find the Mosaic narrative ill-supported, such writers claim with apparent confidence that in the New Testament the Gospels supply a historic basis which cannot be shaken. Plainly, the case is not

* For instance, Professor Müller treats Abraham as a historic personage, who discovered Monotheism.

so. Exactly the same method as discredits the narrative of the Pentateuch will be found to disintegrate the Gospel history. The effect of the narrative in Judges, rationally read, is to show that the sacerdotal life in the wilderness had never been; and the rational reading of the Pentateuch at the same time serves to make it clear that it could never have been. Similarly, the study of Paul's reputedly genuine Epistles, by common consent the oldest documents in the New Testament, discloses no knowledge on Paul's part of the Gospel narrative, save in respect of the bare detail of the crucifixion. The only passages in which these Epistles proffer a narrative statement coinciding with the Gospels are 1 Cor. xi. 23-26 and xv. 3-8; and these passages are obvious forgeries, of which the second has been worked over at least twice. Each passage is introduced with a formula which confesses forgery at a glance. Take away these passages—we shall examine them later—and the writings of Paul, so far from corroborating the Gospels, exhibit such a complete ignorance of the Gospel matter that it is plain the matter was not current in Paul's world any more than the documents. His Jesus is a crucified spectre; and of the Twelve Apostles he has no knowledge.

Let us, to begin with, set down in series a few of the main matters set forth in the Gospels of which Paul gives no hint.

1. He has no single allusion to the parents of Jesus; and therefore of course has no thought of the dogma of the Virgin Mother, any more than of the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. He has no allusion to the birthplace of Jesus, and never once does he, any more than James, writing to the Jews of the Dispersion, name Jesus as "of Nazareth."

3. He never mentions John the Baptist.

4. He cites no Jesuine teachings whatever.

5. He mentions no Jesuine miracles.

6. He never alludes to Judas Iscariot, or to a betrayal, or to a trial of Jesus before a Roman official.

7. He never alludes to the Passion.

8. He never alludes to Peter's denial of Jesus : in the one passage in which he mentions or is made to mention Peter, Cephas figures as a different person (Gal. ii.; Gr. or Rev. Vers.).

The full significance of these lacks in the Pauline propaganda begins to come ont when we place beside them some of the results disclosed by an analysis of the Gospel texts, as regards the earliness or lateness of details in the narrative. It is not to be pretended, of course, that all these results are equally well made out. We know for certain, for instance, that the story of the birth and upbringing of Jesus given in the first two chapters of Matthew is an addition to a document which, like the second Gospel, began without it ; and we are entitled to say that the birth narrative in Luke is a still later embellishment ; but naturally we cannot give equally overwhelming reasons for every reasonable conclusion as to the composition of the documents. For popular purposes, however, it may here suffice to set out with such a book as *The Synoptic Problem for English Readers*, by Mr. Alfred J. Jolley (Macmillan, 1893)—the work of a student who believes in the actuality of the Gospel Jesus, and apparently reverences the Gospel teaching—as presenting the main results of textual research on the question of priority of documents. Mr. Jolley furnishes us with what he thinks may be taken to be " The Primitive Gospel," as nearly as it can be put together from the Synoptics ; and his reconstruction certainly errs more in the direction of inclusion than of exclusion, since he is willing to take as primitive the story given in Luke of the Transfiguration, and Luke's allusion to the Galileans whose blood

Pilate mingled with the sacrifices. Let us see, then, a few of the main matters struck out of the Gospel narrative by Mr. Jolley's cautious process of elimination.

1. There is no birth story ; and no mention of Joseph and Mary.

2. Jesus is never described as "of Nazareth."

3. The passages describing the choice of the twelve, and naming them, disappear.

4. The narrative stops abruptly, with no mention of betrayal, Passion, arrest, trial, or crucifixion.

The most general inferences from these data are: (1) That Paul knew of or believed in a crucified Jesus with no doctrine or biography ; and (2) that after his time there was current a doctrinal biography of a Jesus with no crucifixion story. The combination, as well as the biography, is post-Pauline. Further, the doctrinal biography is found to have been much expanded from time to time by the addition of pure fictions, doctrinal and narrative, such as the Birth Myth (and, if we reason strictly, the Transfiguration Myth) ; while the crucifixion is made the basis of an elaborate tissue of invention.

It does not appear thus far, of course, that the Jesus of the Primitive Gospel is not at bottom a historical post-Pauline personage, barring the supernaturalism. That is to say, there may have been a teaching Jesus, round the memory of whose mission this matter accumulated. But even in this most primitive form of the saga there is no security whatever that any one of the utterances put in the mouth of the isolated Jesus was the original utterance of any preacher. On the contrary, the passage, "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden," has every appearance of being a formula of the mysteries ; the Sermon on the Mount, as given in the canonical Matthew, is a deliberate elaboration of the form preserved in Luke, which again is a compilation

of moral commonplaces current in Jewry. And for the composite canonical Jesus of the Four Gospels—that is, to take the prevailing conception, the mystical Jesus of the Fourth ; the passioning Jesus of Gethsemane ; the Jesus of the Last Supper, betrayed by Judas ; the Jesus who is the friend of Lazarus and his sisters—we have no more historic basis than for the mythical child of the Virgin, cradled in a manger like the Sun-Child of the pagan cults, heralded by angels, and darkening the world at his death. The primitive preaching Jesus disclosed to us by Mr. Jolley's imperfect process of elimination could never, by means of his sayings, have come to figure for a whole age or civilization as a supreme teacher. For that matter, none of the teachings in the whole Four Gospels could ever of themselves have won their reputed author such prestige : only the hypnotizing belief in his divinity and his mission could have led antiquity so to accept him ; and only the hypnotism of an immense tradition could have enabled the pioneer critics of our own age, from the early Deists to Strauss, to find in the mere teaching something above the common run of ethics. But in the relatively primitive form of the story of teaching and miracle the crudity and incoherence of the whole are most apparent ; and the doctrine of the Incarnation on that background becomes so nakedly grotesque that we at once see the impossibility of the Jewish Jesuism becoming a world-cult without haloing itself with a whole cycle of Sun-myth, ritual, mystery, and Gnostic metaphysic.

Our business here, however, is not to trace the process by which the gaunt fanaticism of a Jewish sect became transmuted through centuries into a manifold Gentile cultus, competing with Pagan cults by assimilating their myths, their ritual, and their philosophy. We are concerned with the quasi-biographical mosaic of the Gospels. We have to realize once for all, at the

outset, that that mosaic grew up by accretions of fiction. The canonical Gospels were worked up under the same psychological conditions as the "apocryphal," so-called; and students who set aside the latter as of no authority are worse than inconsistent if they treat the former as better founded, even as regards the supposed primitive nucleus of parables and discourses. For when we see how easily fresh parables and discourses were added to that assumed nucleus, it becomes impossible to believe that we can ever get to an irreducible minimum which stands for the actual utterance of any one man. We have seen that not only does Paul never speak of a Jesus "of Nazareth," but the more primitive matter of the Synoptics contains no such designation. And here at once we come to a cleavage in the canonical compilation which nothing can explain away.

It is, however, one of the most forcible proofs of the general blindness of orthodoxy to the significance of the documentary facts that it has never recognized that an explanation is needed. Nay, professed rationalism has till recent years failed to recognize the crux. It would seem as if the power of seeing even facts lying on the surface of the documents is a matter of slow development. For whole ages believing Christians fail to see the overwhelming fact that Paul had heard nothing of a supernatural birth. Strauss, analyzing the birth myth, equally fails to observe that Paul's Jesus is not "of Nazareth"; indeed, he fails to recognize the significance of the irreconcilable differences of the designations of Jesus in the Gospels themselves. They may be briefly set forth thus :—

(a) Jesus is termed "the Nazarite" (Nazoraios) in the (revised) Greek text of Matt. ii. 23 and xxvi. 71; Luke xviii. 37; John xviii. 5, 7, and xix. 19; Acts ii. 22, iii. 6, iv. 10, vi. 14, xxii. 8, and xxvi. 9.

(*b*) He is termed "the Nazarene" (Nazarenos) in Mark i. 24, x. 47, xiv. 67, xvi. 6, Luke iv. 34 and xxiv. 19.

(*c*) Apart from the texts in which the place Nazareth is directly named, he is termed "of Nazareth" only in John i. 45 (46) and Acts x. 37 (38)—passages plainly tampered with.

It is impossible, of course, to say how far the variations in the MSS. are arbitrary alterations by copyists ;* but it is plain that "the Nazarite" did *not* mean "of Nazareth," whatever "the Nazarene" may have signified ; and the practice of the English Revisers, who, from Luke iv. 34 onwards, always read "of Nazareth," is indefensible, as is the rendering "Nazarene" which predominates in the Vulgate, though it gives "Nazarite" in Matt. ii. 23. The term "Nazarite" signifies a certain kind of sectary or votary (see Judges xiii. 5, 7, xvi. 17, and Josephus, 4 Antiq. iv. 4 and 19 Antiq. vi. 7). And that Nazarite (Nazoraios) was the originally current form in the East appears from the Syrian Peshito, which only at Matt. ii. 23 gives an adjective based on the place-name, Nazareth, and everywhere else gives the equivalent of "Nazoraios" save in Luke iv. 34, where it recurs to a variant of the geographical adjective, and in John i. 45 and Acts x. 38—touched-up passages which in all versions read "of Nazareth."

From this medley there emerge these presumptive facts :—

(*a*) Jesus was called "the Nazarite" only in the later or canonical Gospel of Matthew.

(*b*) He was mainly or entirely called "Nazarene" in the later or canonical Mark.

* In the older Greek text accepted at Oxford we have "Nazarite" in Mark x. 47 and Luke xxiv. 19.

(*c*) He is called by both titles in Luke.

(*d*) He was called only "Nazarite" in John, before the interpolation cited; but even the "Nazarite" passages are probably late additions.

How are these divergences to be accounted for? If we are to reason on critical principles, we are inevitably led to the conclusion that at different times there figured at least two Jesuses :—

1. The primitive or Ebionite Jesus, without cognomen, *some* of whose teachings may be preserved in the reconstructed "Primitive Gospel."

2. A "Jesus the Nazarite," presumably followed by the Christist sect laxly called "the Nazarenes" (properly Nazarites), whose version of Matthew, however, at a late period had the prefatory narrative of the birth at Nazareth.

Then was there ever a real "Jesus of Nazareth" at all? Or was the "Nazareth" story in Matthew a deliberate invention of later Jesuists, who desired either to dissociate themselves from ordinary Nazarism or to give a new bearing to an old name? Either of these seems a reasonable hypothesis. In view of the readiness with which the early sectaries forged or framed whatever record they wanted, the chance of a third Jesus really coming from Nazareth is hardly worth founding on. We may speculate as to whether the designation "Nazarene," introduced four times in Mark, stood for a special sect or was equivalent to Nazarite; but on either view we are dealing with an element added to the original Jesuism; while the "Nazareth" element, be it pure fiction or not, is yet another addition. And all the while Paul's Jesus, doctrineless and deedless, is not even the indefinite Ebionite preaching Jesus, but something earlier, a crucified abstraction serving as a nucleus for a dogma of salvation.

Putting the data together, we reach, if anything at all, some such schema as this :—

1. In Paul's time there was already a cult of a slain Jesus the Christ, a cult which included an adaptation of the mystery ritual of the Pagan Holy Communion (see 1 Cor. x. 21) as practised in the cults of Mithra, Dionysos, and other solar deities. Of this Jesus there were no doctrinal or other records.

2. During Paul's lifetime there grew up another Jesus cult, to which he very distinctly alludes in 2 Cor. xi. 4, where he speaks of newcomers preaching "*another Jesus whom we did not preach.*" This may have been the beginning of the Gospel Jesuism.

3. But even this new Jesus was at most the Judaist prophet who figures in the earlier matter of the Synoptics, a personage as different from the composite canonical or Johannine Jesus as is a Semitic mahdi from the lavendered Saviour of the Sunday-school chromos.

4. Later still, another Judaic sect or "Way" set up yet another Jesus who was a Nazarite sectary or votary, and who after a time became blent with the Jesus of the evangel.

5. Later still, other Jesuists repudiated the first Nazarites and either followed a new Jesus who happened to have been born at the Galilean village of Nazareth, or invented the Nazareth birthplace for the Jesus of the current gospel. Then or later was framed the whole fiction of the first two chapters of Matthew, in which a putative father and a mother were found for the God-begotten Messiah.

6. The mystical Jesus of the Fourth Gospel may have been, to begin with, yet another Jesus; or, as is much more likely, the discourses of that Gospel are a set of fresh fictions.

7. By this time the mystery ritual of the bread and

wine supper had served to establish a circumstantial myth of the institution of the Supper by the God before his death, exactly as in Pagan systems myths are frequently found to be derived from rituals; and the cult had further adapted and mythicized the mystery-drama of the burial and resurrection of the Sun-God, as we know it to have been regularly enacted in the popular cults of Mithra, Osiris, Attis, and Adonis.

8. As Paul's Jesus—that is, the Jesus of the Corinthian and Galatian epistles—figures as crucified, and the cross has there already a mystic significance, there is a presumption that at least the primary Jesus had been crucified or impaled or hanged, though a mystic crucifixion already figured prominently in the cults of Osiris and Attis. But the stories of the Passion and of the betrayal by Judas are pure myths, deriving from the mystery-drama in which the suffering Sun-God is captured during the darkness (see Luke xxii. 53). Some of the details even seem to have been formulated (like the story of the walking on the waves) from pictures, as in the passage Mark xiv. 51–52, which connects with the ancient Egyptian sun myth, adapted in the story of Joseph. The impossible personality of Judas is in all probability evolved from the simple designation "Judaios" = Jew, in the Gentile mystery-drama in which "the Jews" figured as the enemies of the Saviour. (See the newly-recovered "Gospel of Peter.") The betrayal by Peter is presumably a late fiction of an anti-Petrine sect, perhaps also dramatized. The fragment of the "Gospel of Peter," lately found, is incompatible with both stories. Thus the Gospel mosaic presumably contains a larger proportion of pure fiction, even apart from the miracle stories, than of possible doctrine of a real Jesus; and even in the most primitive form to which the Gospel can be reduced, the sayings have no coherence, and for the

most part little plausibility as records of oral teaching.

This, which to some people may be the main point, can be made clear by the reflection that, on the face of the case, not only every Jesus in the series, but every one of the Messiahs or "Lords" of the age—to whose existence we have both the testimony of Josephus and that of the redacted Gospels—could put in circulation what sayings he pleased, every one of which would be for some fanatics the sayings of "the Lord." That there were many Jesuses is *à priori* likely in the highest degree, even if we did not know it from Josephus. Jesus = Jeschu = Joshua = the Saviour (Matt. i. 22); and in the spell-bound Palestinian world the all-importance of names and words made every Joshua a potential Messiah and Liberator, like the mythic successor of Moses. Every preaching Jesus had his chance of making a movement; and further, as the sects multiplied, every sect could invent what sayings it pleased in its own justification. Thus in the passage Matt. xxii. 42–46, Mark xii. 35–37, Luke xx. 41–44, in which Jesus is made to repudiate the idea that the Messiah should be of the line of David, we have the invention of a sect opposed to that, the prevalent Messianic tenet of the time; though this passage has actually been preserved alongside of the historic myth of the Davidic genealogy, which was sooner or later framed to meet the general demand. And in the genealogical myth as it stands we have the invention of a father named Joseph, which in all probability was designed to meet the Samaritan demand that the Messiah should be "Ben-Joseph." The genealogical myth as it finally stood in Luke made Jesus Ben-David and Ben-Joseph, deriving from Nazareth, preluded by the Baptist, heralded by angels, born in a stable at Bethlehem, and cradled in the manger-basket of the Sun-Child. Other mythic demands, as the birth in a cave, with ox and ass

standing by, were met by the Apocryphal Gospels. The whole legend is a flux of fiction.

A "legend," however, we still term the whole, rather than a "myth," simply because there is a presumption that there were some teaching Jesuses concerned in the cult, and that even the primordial Jesus of Paul was a historical personage. He may well have been the Talmudic Jesus Ben Pandira, disciple of Jesus Ben Parachia, who with his master escaped to Egypt in the reign of Alexander Jannæus ("B.C." 106–79), returned later to Palestine, and was stoned to death and afterwards crucified or hanged on a tree, on the day before the Passover, on a charge of necromancy.* This Jesus also seems to blend with another Talmudic Jesus of a later period, who is made the son or grandson of one Mary Magdala "the hair-plaiter." This may either have been the origin of, or a datum derived from, the naming of Jesus's mother and Mary of Magdala in the Christist Gospel. But just as the "Joseph" of that legend is purely mythical, so may the Mary (=Miriam) have been; since Miriam was already a mythic name of high prestige, and even seems to have signified "the nurse." Thus there may have been already in Palestine a purely mystical cult of a Goddess-mother, as Alitta or Isis, nursing a Saviour-child, or Jesus, long before the time of Paul, since the worship of a child-suckling Goddess is certainly of immense antiquity, and in Palestine the Sun-Child or Divine Babe would naturally be a "Jesus." And as Adonis the "Lord" of Syria, and Attis, similarly worshipped, had figured as suffering and dying Saviour Gods from time immemorial, it may be that the Gnostic or mystical Christ was worshipped in Palestine before the quasi-historic Jesus, the strata of whose structure we have briefly scanned. But as to

* See the Talmudic references in Mr. Baring Gould's *Lost and Hostile Gospels.*

this there can be no certainty in the present state of knowledge; and the unreality of the Gospel Jesus is sufficiently made out without any resort to the Gnostic hypothesis; while the early Jesus Ben Pandira actually figures in the Talmud as having five disciples. Their names are given as Matthai, Nakai, Netzer, Boni, and Thoda. The first two point rather curiously to Matthew and Mark, the legendary authors of the two earliest Gospels. The third and fourth, however, look like fancy originals for the two earliest sects, the Nazarites and the Ebionim; and as "Netzer" is Isaiah's word for "branch," which is supposed by some to be in view in Matthew ii. 23, and which is plausibly surmised to have been the word used in the lost Aramaic Targum on Zechariah, where "the branch" *(tsamech)* figures Messianically, there is an air of fiction about the names. Thoda, however, again coincides oddly with the "Thaddaeus" of Matthew and Mark, who in Luke is replaced by "Judas [the son ?] of James"; and in any case the names "Netzer" and "Boni" point to a Rabbinical association of Nazarism and Ebionism with the cult of a Jesus before the Christian era. This is the more important because, save for the wrought-up narrative of the Sepher Toledoth Jeschu, the Jews seem to have preserved no trace of the Christian Jesus, as presented in the Gospels. The Talmudic allusions, the suppression of which in the printed copies was enforced in the seventeenth century by Christian resentment, are never to a Jesus identifiable with the composite Gospel figure; and this fact by itself would count for much against the Gospels as historical documents. It has been suggested by Mr. Baring Gould that the lack is to be set down to the breach of historical recollection among the Rabbis after the fall of Jerusalem; but Mr. Gould himself allows that their recollections went back to the reign of Alexander Jannæus; and the whole

should include the part, in this as in other matters.

There is one more probable historical basis for a detail in the Jesus myth. It is not credible that Paul's Jesus, or any other, had been crucified as "The King of the Jews"; but we know from Dio Cassius that a Jewish king, Antigonus, was scourged, crucified, and afterwards put to death by the order of Mark Antony, before the Christian era. Such an act must needs have made a profound impression on the Jewish people; even if it were not memorized for them by such a drama as was spontaneously set up and preserved among the Peruvians to commemorate the execution of the last Inca; and there is some reason to surmise that the historic fact in regard to King Antigonus was woven into the Jesuist myth.

It will be apparent from all this that if the featureless Jesus of Paul were the distant Jesus of about a century "B.C.," the ordinary chronology for Paul falls to the ground. As a matter of fact, there is only one datum in the accepted epistles which can serve as an independent time-marker, and that is the quasi-corrupt passage 2 Cor. xi. 32, of which two sufficiently different renderings are given in the Authorized and Revised Versions. It is not at all easy to decide as to the "Aretas the king" there mentioned. Damascus was held by a king Aretas at 64 B.C., when Pompey conquered Syria; and it has been argued that from that time forward there could have been no such episode as that described. But Josephus records that Aretas, king of Arabia Petrea, father-in-law of Herod, made war on Herod on the occasion of his putting away his wife to marry Herodias, and defeated him; and that the proposed campaign of Vitellius against Aretas was arrested by the death of Tiberius. Since further the emir Soheym obtained from Caligula the investiture of Iturea, and seeing that the Roman power at Damascus does not seem to have been restored till the reign of Claudius,

there may well have been an occupation of Damascus under Aretas about 37 A.C. Were it otherwise, the later Christians would presumably have deleted the passage. But there remains the old difficulty: Is the Aretas passage forged? It reads uncommonly like an interpolation, and may easily have been one, founded on the passage in Acts ix. 25. Over all the literature of the ages of faith there lies the shadow of pious untruth; and Christian fraud is the great corrosive of all Christian history. If Aretas' campaign was made as stated by Josephus, the Gospel allusions to Herod are irreconcilable with *their* chronology, for already there Herod is represented as cohabiting with Herodias. Plainly, there is no solution compatible with the acceptance of them as historical records.

II.

It remains to consider the myth of the Twelve Apostles. The demonstration of that is twofold. On the one hand, the Gospel narratives on the subject are nakedly unhistorical, passing at a jump from accounts (themselves bearing all the marks of a pragmatic fiction) describing the choice of two or three disciples, to an established institution of twelve; and the narrative of the Acts begins by assuming that the number of twelve must needs be maintained,* giving accordingly the story

* Singularly enough, the Manichæan sect, according to the testimony of Augustine, did preserve among themselves an institution of Twelve Apostles. This was probably much older than the historic Manes, and Zoroastrian or Mithraic in origin. Mithra as Sun-God sat surrounded by the twelve signs. It is noteworthy that in the Christian myth Peter, the chief Apostle, bears the keys, just as does Janus, leader of the months, and is a fisherman, whereas the symbol of Janus is a bark. The "two faces" of Janus may similarly underlie the story of Peter's treachery.

of the election of "Matthias" in place of Judas. As against this we have in all Paul's epistles only one mention of twelve; and that (1 Cor. xv. 5) is in one of the spurious "For I delivered unto you that which I received" passages. Paul is here made to state as current doctrine that Jesus after his death "appeared to above five hundred brethren at once"—a statement found in neither the Gospels nor the Acts. Had it been made current by Paul's epistles, it must have passed into these in the second century; and its isolation can only mean late forgery. But even at that, the passage is doubly falsified, for the mention of "the twelve" is inserted several clauses before a mention of "all the apostles," the interpolator having evidently wanted an explicit mention of "the twelve" to appear in Paul's text. Yet in every other place where the twelve would naturally have been mentioned if twelve there were, the allusion is lacking; and "Cephas, James, and John" are the only names given. It is clear, first, that the story of the fresh election of Matthias is wholly mythical; and, that being so, there can be no presumption against the similar basis of the twelve motive in the Gospels to begin with.

But the argument is not merely negative: the constructive proof, too, is forthcoming. The discovery of *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* puts it beyond all challenge that that document was originally a purely neo-Judaic one, without a single allusion to any Messianic doctrine, or to any Jesus; that an Ebionistic Jesuism begins to appear in the earlier additions; and that Christism only appears still later. It is now established, then, that there was a current Judaic manual of *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* before the Jesuist cult existed, and that the early Judaic Jesuism builded upon that, taking over the datum of "Twelve Apostles" with the document. The Jewish "twelve apostles" must

have been those of the High Priest or the Patriarch, long ago conjectured by Mosheim, on the basis of patristic references, to have constituted the typic institution on which Jesus founded his. The Jewish Twelve Apostles are now definitely seen to have been circulators of a monotheistic ethical doctrine* among the Dispersion, from whom they gathered tribute for Jerusalem or Tiberias. Their circulated doctrine, with its title, supplies the nucleus of the Christian Twelve-myth, which we have seen to be post-Pauline. And we may even go further, and confidently surmise that the fiction of the "seventy" (or seventy-two) disciples in Luke—a fiction in presence of which orthodoxy can only maintain an embarrassed silence—rests like the myth of the twelve on the fact of a Jewish institution. As the Dispersion flourished, and the tribute to Palestine increased with the extension of Jewish wealth, the Twelve, who to begin with were ethical teachers, would naturally be supplemented by subordinate collectors; and even as at first Twelve messengers would be appointed to represent the mythic twelve tribes, so later seventy would be appointed to represent the mythic seventy (or seventy-two) nations of Hebrew lore, among whom fallen Jewry was scattered. There is no other explanation whatever for the seventy story in Luke, which even orthodoxy semi-rationally sets aside as fiction. But if a seventy myth could enter into the evangel, equally so could a twelve myth; and the seventy story is just as circumstantial as the story of the twelve, save for the name-list and the repetitions. We end as we began, by finding the Gospel narratives historically valueless even where

* It should be noted that this description is exactly applicable to the Epistle of James, an obviously Judaic document, with two formal Christist interpolations. The title "brother of the Lord," applied to Paul's James, was probably a group-title, not a term of relationship.

non-supernatural, and the modern Evhemerism of the Neo-Unitarian school, who think to distinguish facts from fictions in a religious saga by the mere canon of possibility, unworthy of the name of science. The "essential Christ" of the belletrists is about as plausible a reality as would be an essential Krishna or an essential Osiris; and the endless emotion bestowed by pietists and empirics to-day on the spurious spectre of the Gospels is not a whit better based in science than the hysteria of the "women weeping for Tammuz" who exasperated the Jahwist mahdi, or than the hierology of Paul, to whom the Pagan Christs, Mithra and the rest, were actual demons.

THE MYTH OF JUDAS ISCARIOT.

(1893.)

I.

Apropos of an article in *Good Words* by the Bishop of Ripon, a leader-writer in the *Daily News** passes into a state of burning indignation against Judas Iscariot. The Bishop had called Judas, among other things, "a type of the man without principles"; and the reviewer, though he does not expressly say so, seems to feel that this is as inadequate as Milman's characterization of "the extraordinary conduct of Judas Iscariot," which so delighted Carlyle. He fears bad results, inasmuch as "the modern passion for whitewashing the infamous has not even spared Judas Iscariot." Hence these cries :—

"We have the discomfort of believing that Judas possibly was always able to persuade himself that his motives were high and holy. As to his conduct, simpler ages than ours correctly regarded him as the extreme instance of badness. He was the meanest of all dastards, of all traitors the most treacherous. He betrayed the highest cause, the Supreme Master; he sold them both, and he sealed his crime with a kiss. It is absurd to pretend that there is any loophole for Judas Iscariot. If there are to be any moral judgments at all, then Dante was right when he placed Judas even deeper down in the Inferno than Brutus and Cassius. .....This is the simple, natural, and, in all senses, catholic view of Judas. He is not a curious study in psychology; he is not a poor fellow-creature whom we should pity rather than condemn.

* March, 1893.

We only debilitate our sense of black and white, right and wrong, when we argue in this modern way. Say that Judas was no more responsible for being Judas than a rattlesnake is responsible for being a rattlesnake. But we kill rattlesnakes, and Iscariot did justice on himself. There is no philosophy, there is nothing but mawkishness, and the desire to say some new thing, in looking for excuses. A bad man is a bad man."

And so on, in the best Macauliflowery style. The *Daily News* moralist is determined to be on the side of the angels; and we shall next have from him, doubtless, a discourse on the immorality of Lot's daughters. Comments on the doings of Jacob might follow, were it not that they would hardly suit the moralist's public, inasmuch as Jacob's scoundrelism was the means of bringing his deity's blessing on the chosen people, and by consequence on "our Saviour"; and the "Nonconformist conscience" would be troubled by any strictures on the divinely-blessed tactic. Besides, it might be difficult to show that Jacob's stratagem was a less base transaction than that of the supreme Judas himself. On the whole, it is safest to stick to the orthodox positions.

II.

What may be suggested to rationalist readers of the *Daily News* by its hysterics over Iscariot is the peculiar exiguity of the theme. The Greeks got tired after ten centuries of rant about Marathon; and even Christians might be supposed by this time to have got over their first resentment of the act which, on their own telling, was the proximate means of securing their salvation. Indeed, the pristine warmth of the leader-writer of the *Daily News* is grown somewhat rare. He reluctantly proceeds to present some of the explanatory suggestions by which certain eminent ecclesiastics have sought to fill up the deficiency of righteous wrath which they

detected in themselves. They have gone so far in the direction of common-sense as to try to give some human plausibility to the legend. The moralist's exposition of their views is a little mixed :—

"The Bishop of Ripon thinks that Judas showed 'supreme folly' if he destroyed his own post as 'treasurer' of a poor company for about four pounds sterling. It might have taken him long to steal as much, we reply, and the money was enough to buy a piece of real property. Whately's theory is that Judas wanted to force the hand of his Master, to hurry things on, make an imposing miracle necessary, and bring matters to a point. This the Bishop of Ripon rejects. Judas had his warning given to him before he committed his crime. Besides, there is no reason to search for such subtleties. A mercenary traitor is a mercenary traitor. De Quincey's theory is much the same as Whately's. Professor Fairbairn, according to the Bishop, argues that Judas was a disappointed man, and took his revenge. He had expected a temporal kingdom ; there was to be no temporal kingdom, therefore he avenged himself by treachery. This at all events does not clear the character of Iscariot, as Whately's theory might do to a considerable extent. For it is undeniable that Judas took his reward. He purchased a field with the money, according to one version ; in another, he threw the money down, and hanged himself. This version of course makes most for Whately's view, or at least implies remorse.

"The Bishop of Ripon argues that Judas wanted to stand well with both sides. If his Master was condemned, he at least was safe. Should his Master 'emerge triumphant,' then Judas was still of the winning party. But how could he hope, even taking the affair on a common human level, to escape detection? Accompanied in the night by a crowd with torches, he was certain to be found out ; and, as has been said by the Bishop, he had been detected and warned before he committed his crime. Judas must have been exceedingly stupid if he fancied he could favour one side, yet seem to favour the other. Cleverness is not necessarily part of a treacherous character ; but if the Bishop is right, Iscariot was not only a traitor but a dullard."

Thus far towards science have pulpit and press got between them. Let us see if, for those who have not the fear of Mrs. Christian Grundy before their eyes, there is any further progress possible.

III.

One important phase of the problem, even at first sight, has escaped the bishops, and has not suggested itself to their eagle-eyed critic. It may be stated in the question, What was there for Judas to betray? He is represented as one of twelve followers of a personage who went about openly teaching and working miracles, and who had made himself conspicuous to the whole people of Jerusalem by riding into the city on two asses, in a triumphal procession. If the high priests wanted to take this personage, they could easily do so at any time, since the narrative denies any attempt at concealment on his part. But we have an elaborate story of Judas arranging with the high priests for thirty pieces of silver to tell them what all Jerusalem knew or could easily know, and to point out to them a man whom their officials had had a hundred opportunities of seeing. What was the sense of it? If Whately and the Bishop of Ripon had brought their speculative powers to bear on this problem, they would have done at least as much service to history as they have rendered by their benevolent but supererogatory theories of Iscariot's motives; and the *Daily News* man might have had a less trite topic for his ethical eloquence.

There are some passages inserted in the narrative by way of giving some colour to the employment of Judas by the priests, which in the early ages had evidently seemed to the faithful to need some explanation. We are told that they wanted to "take Jesus by subtilty," but "not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people." But this only forces afresh the question, What subtilty was needed? Jesus himself is made to say, "I was daily in the temple teaching, and ye took

me not." He could be followed wherever he went with his train—to Bethany or to the Mount of Olives; there was no subtilty needed to trace such a party; and still less was it necessary, when the party was traced, that the guide should go up to and kiss the notorious leader, by way of identifying him. Why should Judas thus bring on himself the maximum of possible odium? And why take a multitude with swords and staves to effect the capture, if it was wished to avoid tumult?

Again, what "cause" was betrayed? What does our afflicted brother of the *Daily News* have in his mind when he says that Judas "betrayed the highest cause, the Supreme Master"? He compares Judas to Murray of Broughton, to Assynt, and to Menteith—all from the "land o' the leal," by the way, on Mr. Gladstone's view of the purport of that pleasing name for heaven. When a Scot takes to sentimentalism he is apt to be a bad case: *corruptio optimi*, let us say. Menteith, as it happens, was really all along an adherent of Edward;* but if he had actually "betrayed" Wallace, he was betraying a cause indeed. It was death to Wallace and ruin to Scottish independence. What analogous cause did Judas in the legend betray? Macleod of Assynt caught Montrose by searching for him as any enemy would. If he had really "betrayed" Montrose, he was betraying his king's and his leader's cause, which might otherwise have succeeded. What would have happened to the "cause" of Jesus if he had not been captured? Murray of Broughton saved his own cowardly life, after being captured, by turning evidence against Lovat, a fox of a hardier breed, who could die game. That men should have applied the name of "Judas" to all these is a proof only of the normal muddlement of the average intelligence. The "betrayal" of Jesus by Judas is a

* Burton ii., 226.

phenomenon to which history can give no parallel, because in history things do not happen without a reason. It is only in myth that they do. And that is the explanation here. The rhetoric of the *Daily News* essayist is worthy of a nursery play. On the face of the "sacred narrative" there was no "cause" for Judas to betray; and there was no betrayal. Jesus is represented as seeking his death and predicting and preparing for the "betrayal." The high priests were paying thirty coins for piper's news; and Judas was incurring open odium to no purpose. It was as if a captain in the Salvation Army should betray General Booth to the police when he was speaking on the platform at Exeter Hall, by going up to him and touching him on the shoulder. Well might the semi-rationalistic Churchmen seek to explain "the extraordinary conduct of Judas Iscariot." With their methods, however, they can never explain anything. They take the old line of explaining why Lot's wife looked back, and how she may have been naturally petrified, instead of asking whence came the story about Lot's wife.

IV.

Plainly, the story of Judas is part of a historical fiction. It connects with the story of the Passion; and the story of the Passion, it has been shown,* is on the face of it a fiction. Neither the Passion nor the story of Judas is ever mentioned in the Pauline or other Epistles: the only approach to a reference is in the passage of 1 Cor. xi. 23, ff.: "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread," etc.; and this passage has been shown to be,

* *National Reformer*, September 25th, 1892.

like that in 1 Cor. xv. 3, ff., a plain forgery in whole or in part. The "I received of the Lord" would mark Paul as either a liar or a lunatic if he had so expressed himself, and both passages bear evident traces of interpolation. For the rest, Paul never mentions Judas; and it is inconceivable that he should not have done so if the story of the betrayal were current in his time. Of course Paul's total silence on the Gospel teachings and miracles, to say nothing of the Virgin Birth, strikes decisively against the Gospels as a whole, forcing us to the conclusion that he wrote of a Jesus—the Talmudic or another—of whom there was no tradition current save that he was the Messiah, and was crucified. But if he had the crucifixion story without the Judas story, there is a double presumption against the latter, which, on its merits, we see to be hopelessly unhistorical. Finally, the Judas story is expressly excluded by an expression in the newly-discovered "Gospel according to Peter." In the closing paragraph of that fragment it is stated that "we, *the twelve disciples of the Lord*, wept and grieved." On which Canon Armitage Robinson remarks that "'the *twelve* disciples' is perhaps a mere slip of the author, or of a copyist; but it is conceivable that Judas too as well as Pilate [who is exonerated] underwent a cleansing process, *if indeed he was ever mentioned in our writer's narrative.*" If, indeed! The obvious conclusion is that he was not, and this because his legend was not current when "Peter" was composed.

V.

Whence, then, came the legend? The story of Peter's denial, to which Paul never refers, as he surely would have done if it were current, was presumably invented by the later anti-Judaists to discredit the traditional

Judaic apostle ; and similarly the story of the desertion of the Master by all the apostles looks like a Gentile attempt to discredit the Jewish apostolate in the lump. On that view, a story making one of them specially a traitor would partly serve to exonerate the rest. In all the Gospels the Judas story is visibly a patch-work. In Matt. xxvi. we have it mentioned twice over (14, 47) that Judas was "one of the twelve." In Luke xxii. 3, 47, the statement is repeated in the same way. In John the whole betrayal story is stuck piecemeal in the midst of a discourse ; and "Judas Iscariot, Simon's son," or "Judas the son of Simon Iscariot" is similarly twice specified, being here distinguished from "Judas, not Iscariot," who is not named in Matthew and Mark, but appears in Luke as "the son of James." It is with the Judases as with the Maries : they are a variable quantity. And the presumption in both cases is the same : that the story is really based on the primeval (and variable) Gentile mystery-drama on which the Gospel legend generally is based. The probability is that "Judas," in the Greek *Ioudas*, was at first simply *Ioudaios*, "a Jew"; and the hypothesis is strengthened by the apostle-name *Thaddeus* in Matthew and Mark. The writer of pseudo-Peter was markedly hostile to the Jews ; and he would represent a common Gentile feeling, which, however, might be suspended in the case of the Twelve Apostles, whose ostensible "Teaching" was really the first Christian document, having been to begin with a Judaic one. But the great point of pseudo-Peter is that "the Jews," *Ioudaioi*, were the real slayers of the Lord. In a mystery-play framed for this standpoint a Jew would figure as leading the band who captured the Lord ; and the episode of the kiss might readily arise as expressing the confused idea that the God could not be captured by force, and would have to be taken "by subtilty"—an idea which would next have to be capped by representing

him as knowing perfectly well what was intended, having "given the sop." These details must remain matter of speculation: all that is clear is that the Judas story is thoroughly unhistorical; and that the variable mystery-play is the source of such an episode, as it is of the items of the Passion and the Rock Tomb and the details of the resurrection. On the face of the Jesuist narratives we have wide variation: in Matthew Judas hangs himself, and the thirty pieces of silver are shown to fulfil a prophecy. In Mark and Luke "money" is mentioned, but no sum; in John there is no money and no kiss; in Mark, Luke, and John there is no mention of the traitor's end; in the Acts there is no hanging, but an accident; and that is told in an interpolation. Such is "inspired" history.

If we look into the story below the Jesuist details, we find traces of a primitive mythology which may date back for ages beyond Jesuism. The phrase in Luke, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness," and the whole circumstance of the Passion and capture being in the night, remind us that we are dealing with a growth whose roots are in the sun myth. But for our present purpose it may suffice to show what a piece of childish and fortuitous fiction is this solemn Christian tale, which has furnished Europe for fifteen centuries with a preposterous type for treachery, and can still inspire infantine rodomontade in the London *Daily News*, "the leading Liberal journal."

FREEMAN ON CHRISTIANITY.

(1895.)

EVEN to some sceptics it may seem extravagant, or worse, to say that the historic credit of Christianity stands largely on ignorance, especially if the proposition be purposely made to cover the cases of the most distinguished believers of these days. Above all will it be apt to seem outrageous if it be expressly applied to the case of one of the most learned historians of the century, the late Dr. Edward Freeman. And yet I maintain advisedly, in view of the "confession of faith" given to the world in the recently published Life and Letters of that historian, that his acceptance (such as it was) of Christianity is that of a learned man who had no right knowledge of the beginnings of Christian history, and who was indeed partly incapacitated by prejudice and habit for such knowledge. There is such a thing as learned ignorance, or, to use a phrase of Mr. John Morley's, unlearned learning. Mr. Morley has himself supplied an illustration in this very connection; and it may make our criticism of Mr. Freeman seem less out-of-the-way if we first note how Mr. Morley, an accomplished humanist who ought to have made it part of his business to know the substantial truth about the main matters of religious history, is demonstrably unaware of essential parts of that truth, and makes sweeping generalizations in terms of his misinformation.

I will quote in evidence three passages from one of his maturer works, his valuable monograph on Rousseau :—

"The one cardinal service of the Christian doctrine, which is of course to be distinguished from the services rendered to civilization in early times by the Christian Church, has been the contribution to the active intelligence of the West, of those moods of holiness, awe, reverence, and silent worship of an Unseen not made with hands which the Christianizing Jews first brought from the East" (ed. 1886, ii. 259).

"The divine pitifulness which we owe to Christianity, and which will not be the less eagerly cherished by those who repudiate Christian tradition and doctrines, enjoins upon us that we should ask who are the wicked, and which is he that is without sin among us?" (ii. 271.)

"Its [the *Discours* of Rousseau] vigorous disparagement of science, of the deadly pride of intellect, is an anticipation in a very precise way of the attitude taken by the various Christian Churches and their representatives now and for long, beginning with De Maistre, the greatest of the religious reactionaries after Rousseau" (i. 145).

The last passage is perhaps the least important of the three for our purpose, but it is noteworthy enough as showing how little knowledge of the history of theology may suffice a scholarly critic to generalize large tracts of the history of culture. Mr. Morley evidently supposes that the attitude and method of Rousseau in the first *Discours*, and of De Maistre in general, were new in religious discussion in Rousseau's day. Yet every observant student even of his own country's history must have known that the attitude in question has repeatedly been taken in times of intellectual stir long before the time of Rousseau. It is in fact an attitude expressly taken up in the Gospels; it was common in the first Christian centuries; it was taken up by Pope Gregory the Great; it was taken up by St. Bernard, by Savonarola, by the Puritans, by the Scotch Presbyterians of the seventeenth century, by the German Pietists of

the age before Rousseau. Always it has been one of the commonest positions in controversy between pietists and sceptics or between orthodox believers and heretics. To derive it from Rousseau is to misconceive the organic structure of the human intelligence, and the nature of intellectual movement. It is finally unintelligible how Mr. Morley can so understand the matter.

And the same criticism applies with still greater force to the other passages cited. Mr. Morley is so eloquent a writer that it is sometimes difficult to distil a clear meaning from his over-loaded phrases ; but it is safe to say, first, that every one of the things which he says were "first brought from the East by the Christianizing Jews" was in the West before either Jews or Christians carried their creed there ; and, further, that the moods of "awe" and "silent worship of an Unseen" were much more common among the philosophizing Pagans than among the Christianizing Jews. The whole drift and effort of Christism was towards a bringing down of the "Unseen" to an explicitly human level ; and if the creed ever became associated with a more abstract frame of mind it was certainly not by reason of the spirit of the first missionaries. The epistles of Paul are the utterances of a bustling dogmatist intent on saving men by formulas and sacraments ; and his spirit is not to be compared with that of Euripides or Virgil, Socrates or Seneca, in the matter of dignity and serenity. And as were the teachers, so were the taught. The idea of the early Christian flocks as refined and gracious pietists has been built up by the imagination of modern Christendom, by sentimental historians and novelists and artists : it is far removed indeed from the pictures given either in Paul's rebukes to his Corinthian converts or in the avowals of the later Fathers.

But strangest of all is the assertion that it is a "divine pitifulness which we owe to Christianity" that

makes us recoil from consigning "the wicked" to an eternal hell. Mr. Morley's extraordinary statement is made by way of criticism of a levity of Rousseau's, who, like the Highland gillie in Mr. Black's story, did not care if the wicked at the judgment day had not a leg to stand upon. As if the capricious and neurotic Rousseau were to be taken as typifying decently even the Deism of the eighteenth century, not to speak of the Rationalism of the nineteenth. Why, the exact opposite of Mr. Morley's account is the truth. It was the fanatical virulence of Christianity that first made the vulgar doctrine of eternal punishment, which was utterly rejected by Epictetus and Seneca, the universal belief of Europe, civilized and barbarian ; and so far is Christianity from prompting to a sane concern as to "who are the wicked?" and "who is without sin?", it is the one European religion that has taught whole nations and whole ages to believe that the worst wickedness is unbelief in a dogma, and that crimson sins can be made white as snow by the mere act of credulity. Mr. Morley's account of the matter is really worthy of a fashionable preacher, confectioning the faith for the palate of propriety and sentimentalism.

If we can have such perversion of fact and darkening of counsel from an ostensibly rationalistic and unquestionably able writer, trained in the Positivist school, it is small wonder that we have the wildest figments about Christian history promulgated every day by ordinary people—that we have our clergy crediting their creed with the doctrinal and practical overthrow of slavery, and our Lady Henry Somersets alleging it to have raised the status of women from the start. It is no use referring the clergy to the Gospels and the Epistles, and to the history of slavery ancient and modern : they do not want to find or tell the truth. It is no use referring the Lady Henry Somersets to the careful researches of

the Christian Professor Donaldson : they will not take the trouble to follow careful researches. But most baffling of all is the obsession of mind, born of long tradition and congenital lack of insight, which manifests itself in the utterances of those believers who have actually been over the historical ground. Of such, surely, is Freeman. He was not wise or deep ; he was not scientific, though he loved to figure as a user of the comparative method and an assertor of the unity of history ; he was not judicious, witness his schoolboyish flings at all French kings and at William Wallace, and his raptures about the Teutonic race ; but he was certainly learned, and that in many fields. Professor Bury, editing the new edition of his volume on the History of Federal Government, notes how M. Marcel Dubois acknowledges his "irreproachable erudition," while thinking him anything but irreproachable in his judgment. And yet this is how the man of learning, the self-appointed scourge of the erring Froude, declares himself to his friend Bishop Patterson in 1888 :—

"You ask, Am I still a believer? Certainly. That is, I believe the Christian religion to be from God, in a sense beyond that in which all things are from God. One cannot study history without seeing this. The fact that there was a Holy Roman Empire, that is the fact that the Roman Empire could ever come to be holy in a Christian sense, is enough. (Como, November 13th.) Christianity, in its birth Semitic, when rejected by those to whom it was first offered, became the religion of the Roman Empire, and it abides such. It is the religion of all the countries that have come under Roman influence, that is, of Europe and European influences ; *beyond that it has made very little way.* I compare it with Islam, which is in the like sort the Arabian religion, the religion of all countries that have come under Arabian influences, and of none other. But mark the difference. Islam *succeeds by the most obvious causes,* by appealing to *all that was good and bad* in the Arab of the seventh century. Christianity, on the other hand, went *right in the teeth of all that was good and bad* in the Roman of the fourth century. Yet it succeeded ; and I cannot

account for its success by any ordinary cause. As I said in one of my published lectures, for Cæsar Augustus to be led to *worship a crucified Jew* was a greater miracle than the cleaving of rocks or the raising of the dead." [Italics ours.]

There is a facility of nonsense here which it would perhaps not be fair to criticise verbatim: the writer probably would never have written for publication his absurd statement that Christianity went in the teeth of "all that was good and bad" in the Roman of the fourth century. But he did write for publication, as he reminds us, that "for Cæsar Augustus to be led to worship a crucified Jew was a greater miracle than the cleaving of rocks or the raising of the dead"; and he held by this formula, and by the belief in the raising of the dead and in the supernatural propagation of Christianity, in the year 1888. It is difficult to over-state the essential ignorance of the mind which can arrive at such conclusions from a study of the civil and religious history of Rome. For anything he had really gained from modern science and the "comparative method," Freeman might as well have lived in the Middle Ages, or at Salamanca.

Let us first consider the central sophism or hallucination of the phrase about Cæsar Augustus worshipping "a crucified Jew." This account of the Incarnate God of the Gospel, be it observed, is thrown out to a Christian Bishop, who doubtless does not complain. Yet what could be at bottom falser than to say that it was a crucified Jew that was worshipped by Constantine and Justinian? They worshipped a Triune God, of whom the second member got physically born of a woman on earth through the agency of the third; got crucified to appease the first; and reascended to the empyrean to sit at the first's right hand and judge all the world. If to worship that fabulous personage was to worship a crucified Jew, then to worship Hermes was to worship

an Arcadian cattle-thief; to worship Osiris was to worship a chopped-up Egyptian; to worship Hercules was to worship a cremated pugilist; to worship Dionysos was to worship an intemperance lecturer; to worship Phœbus Apollo, the far-darter, was to worship a sheep-farmer's drudge; to worship Mithra was to worship a butcher; to worship Attis was to worship a castrated herd-boy; to worship Cybele was to worship an elderly female of loose morals; to worship Zeus was to adore an incorrigible Don Juan; to worship Poseidon was to reverence a beastly ruffian; and to adore Hephaistos was to worship a lame blacksmith. Cæsar Augustus, as Julian, did worship Phrygian Attis and Persian Mithra and Syrian Adonis, all non-Roman deities. Cæsar Augustus in general, before Julian, did worship Hercules, who was said to be burned, whom the late Mr. Buckle has characterized as a vagabond, and who was otherwise said by Diodorus Siculus to go about doing good to mankind. If those impassive personalities who are generalized as Cæsar Augustus could worship an alien Hercules or any other demi-god, or shrewish Juno or wanton Venus or bellowing Mars, who had all the characteristics of plebeians and slaves of Roman or non-Roman race, why should they not as readily worship an alleged Omnipotent God who submitted to be crucified as Apollo submitted to work for Admetus? If Alexander Severus could adore alike Apollonius of Tyana, Orpheus, Abraham, and Jesus, why should not a later emperor in the ordinary course of events come to worship Jesus in particular and let Orpheus and Apollonius recede to a back place? If the Persians came to think more of mediatorial Mithra than of Ahura Mazda, why should not mediatorial Jesus come to be the leading figure of the Trinity for the despots of Byzantium?

The most stupefying circumstance about Freeman's

dictum is that it comes from one who was always declaiming about "the unity of history." It is plain that the real meaning of that expression never dawned on him, any more than the real significance of the "comparative method." If we are to believe that a supernatural interposition was made to lead the later Roman Emperors to worship Jesus, we can conceive a unity of history only in the sense in which Bossuet conceived it, a sense as absurd as the doctrine that the earth is the centre of the Universe. If we are to explain the conversion of Constantine by miracle, we may just as well set up the same explanation for a hundred other events, for the schism of Luther and the assassination of Henri IV., for the fall of Constantinople and the final triumph of Gladstone over Beaconsfield. Freeman, as I have said, goes to the very limits of verbal folly in order to make out that the rise of Christianity cannot be accounted for "by any ordinary causes." A man not bereft of all judgment could scarcely have passed the proofs of the sentence affirming that Christianity "went right in the teeth of all that was good and bad" in the Roman of the fourth century. And yet some such insanity is really involved in the assertion that the rise of Christianity cannot be explained by "ordinary causes." To a rational student the "ordinary causes" are obvious and adequate enough. Gibbon indicated some of them, if not with perfect accuracy, at least clearly enough to make a complete explanation easy. If Freeman could not trace the causation, so much the worse for his judgment and his claim to have a real knowledge of history. The mere facts that Christianity admittedly took over three hundred years to attain State recognition, and that it was a popular religion before it became that of the emperor, are sufficient to overrule all Freeman's rhetoric ; and the process by which Christianity became a popular religion is as

intelligible as any process of transition in history. It assimilated the chief sacraments and ritual usages of the most popular Saviour cults; it made use of the Jewish expedient of widely duplicated sacred books; it adopted a popular and republican system of sect government, giving its members a new status of voluntary association in place of the lost political status; it made converts wholesale by systematic almsgiving; it absorbed masses of slaves and paupers; it used all the current machinery of exorcism and incantation; it made capital by putting fictions of martyrs and saints in place of legends of heroes and nymphs; it cultivated the prestige which asceticism wins in every semi-civilized or barbarous population; it appealed to Jews by Messianism and Scripturalism, and to Western Pagans through their deference to oriental magic; it drew support from every form of religious tendency subsisting among the ignorant masses of the towns: and when it got its decisive political chance by the death of Julian it was recommended to Cæsar Augustus by the very fact that the Cæsar who had critically opposed it had fallen in his flower. Every cause in the chain is "ordinary" and natural. To say that Omnipotence somehow intervened to raise it to supremacy is as plausible as to say that Omnipotence, previously or later, promoted Krishnaism, or Osirianism, or Molochism, or Buddhism, or Mohammedanism. If we are to measure the success of systems by the rapidity of their rise, Islam has ten times the title of Christianity to be regarded as supernaturally furthered. It spread faster and further; it made conquests after Christianity had ceased to do so; it overran nearly all the cradle lands of the Christian faith, and holds most of them to this day; it destroyed the first Christian empire after that had endured a thousand years. We may be sure that the eastern world, when it heard of the ruin of Antioch

by earthquake, and of the fall of Constantinople by arms, was rather more spontaneously satisfied that God was against Christianity than was Freeman that God had been for it.

And yet Freeman was a very learned historian. He could spend fifty years in amassing historical learning without learning to understand history, to know man. He is the last proof of the paralyzing power of the English university system, which gives a few men letters and in many stifles the spirit that alone can make letters vital. Even in the university he has been partially impeached. "My friend Professor Freeman," writes the late Thorold Rogers, "has published a very copious history of the Norman Conquest. He has, I do not doubt, collected every scrap of history, in the common meaning of the word, which could be procured from every source, domestic and foreign, and commented on them with a fulness which is almost overwhelming. But he has made little use of Domesday Book, which, after the skeleton of facts is arranged, contains far more genuine living material than all his other authorities."* It is substantially the same with Freeman's briefer interpretation of ancient history. He read all the documents without ever understanding what manner of life it was that gave rise to the documents. But the outspokenness of Rogers was remarkable enough in matters of secular history, and it will be many a day before an Oxford professor makes a similar criticism of Freeman's much more vulnerable positions in regard to religious history. He typifies, and will continue to typify, our average university output in that connection—a product of erudite error, laborious misconception, and strenuous superficiality. Of such is sustained the kingdom of Philistia.

* *Economic Interpretation of History*, p. 3.

TOLSTOY AND THE ETHICS OF JESUS.*

(1895.)

I.

HERE and there in the literature of all nations there arise writers who make their effect by a certain immanence of mental energy, going with a sustained intensity of speech, rather than by any general depth or breadth of judgment on things. Such may have been some of the Hebrew prophets; such in part were Luther and Savonarola and Knox; such was Rousseau; such is Mr. Ruskin; and such, lastly, is Count Leo Tolstoy. It is the mark of such personalities to show a wild and fitful insight into some truths of life which other men glose over or miss; and a prevailing sincerity of purpose which secures them the respect of many who see that their egoism can at times carry them as far beyond truth and justice as beyond wisdom and self-restraint. These figures, and their utterances, set some scientific observers speculating on the connection between genius and insanity: others, to better purpose, they set brooding on the nature of those

* *The Four Gospels*, harmonized and translated by Leo Tolstoy. In three parts. Translated from the original manuscript into English at the request of the author, Part i. (Croydon: The Brotherhood Publishing Co. London: Walter Scott, Limited.)

border-lands of unreason which, be they broad and dark and stormy or narrow and sunny and calm, seem to lie in some sort round all intelligence. Always they stimulate anew that study of man which is at once the end and the beginning of wisdom.

Certainly not the least interesting, to the humanist, of all the figures just named is Count Leo Tolstoy. And whatever be the nature, in the main, of the interest he has thus far aroused, his case seems perhaps more fitted than any of the rest to instruct the Naturalists of mental science. With some little help from biography, we can piece together our conception of him from his books. From both sides he is shown to have lived the life of a Russian military man-of-the-world, tasting all manner of experience, living the sexual life of the type, only under the restraints of literary genius and a natural sense of justice. In his vigorous old age we find him successively repudiating the caste status, the military ethic, and the sexual instinct, in terms of which the earlier part of his life was lived; and finding for these views energetic arguments, all tending to bottom themselves on a fresh interpretation of the Christian Gospels. It thus lies on the face of the case that with a great literary gift, a high—though not the highest—power of observing and presenting character in action, and a continuous energy of mind, he has neither much scientific faculty nor much scientific preparation. He could pass the prime of his long life in the light of a code which only in late life did he see to be false. It was not a process of mere connected reasoning, then, that brought him to his later views. He has come when past middle life to the study of the Christian religion in the mental attitude of sincere men in the Middle Ages, of sincere young students of to-day who know nothing of the rational and historical analysis of that religion. He is primarily a

strong temperament, a vigorous will in mental action. And when we learn that as a matter of medical fact, while still vigorous, he suffers from disease of the liver, we have, in conjunction with the fact of his special sincerity and directness of character, a probable clue to the whole transformation. Liver disease is apt to be an anti-sexual and an anti-militant agent. In a man with a vigorous moral nature and an unscientifically energetic intelligence, it will set up an argued or ethical repugnance to the acts to which it has set up a temperamental repugnance : that is to say, the physiological modification, the moral bias, and the general mental energy will work to that result among them. The first without the others would have left a strife-shunning and pessimistic ascetic, or perhaps a Bibliolator : the added moral bias, the active brain, and the bias to literature yield us a strenuous unscientific propagandist.

Thus we have had from Tolstoy, first, a repudiation of the social system which creates an idle rich class and a poor working class. Here we have an expression of the innate moral bias and the general mental energy, an expression which might have been reached by him independently of any physiological change. In several of his works, written before he adopted the peasant life, we find strong utterance of the sense of fundamental justice as between man and man, of the essential unfairness of class divisions. A scientifically thinking man would reason, on such a moral basis, that the way to remedy the evils and inequalities of society is to educate it, to evolve it in the light of a sociology as well as of a moral motive. But Tolstoy's mind, though always doctrinary and expository, is not scientific ; and for his vigorous will the only way to act on the moral motive is to renounce his own class status, and live and work as an artizan or peasant.

Then, as the physiological element comes into play, we have a nearly concurrent polemic on the one hand against the sexual instinct, and on the other hand against the military spirit and policy. The first instinct he attacks vehemently, unscientifically, unphilosophically, as he does everything: not seeking to grasp the matter as a phase of the vast total of Nature, but expressing the neurotic recoil of the nun, of the hepatic, from the sexual instinct, and using his literary gift dramatically to make others feel as he does. And equally arbitrary, equally literary and unscientific, is his attack on the military spirit and the militarist system. He positively resents the idea of a sociological cure of the trouble, of a rational abandonment of war and armies as wasteful and stupid. The cure must be wrought in his way or not at all: it must be a matter of individual religious conviction that war is wrong and unchristian. The common-sense political arguments which he could not see while he was a soldier, he cannot conceive as ever influencing anybody else. He was changed in a transcendental, inward way, finding his arguments in the commands of Jesus (though these also had been perfectly known to him while he was in the army); so other people must be changed in that way if any good is to be done. He will have nothing to do with the Peace Societies, or with policies of disarmament and arbitration.* Thus he ends by zealously making a religious appeal which his own experience might easily show him to be futile. It never occurs to him that if he passed the greater part of his life believing in militarism and also believing in Christianity, he must have done so in virtue of a very strong human bias. As he cannot explain how his bias came to alter, he can have

* See *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, Eng. tr., vol. i., ch. 6.

no statable reason for believing that he can alter the bias of other people. Yet, bent firstly and lastly on expressing himself, he makes light of the very considerations that might really sway ordinary minds, declaring that it is idle to preach the blessedness of peace and the folly and horror of war, since all men have always recognized them ; when the dispassionate use of his own power of observing character might show him that very few men as a rule realize either the one or the other, in virtue of the predominating bias to strife and the evil education of nationalist tradition. And his own doctrine of non-resistance, like all his other doctrines, is put without balance, without reasonable regard to the facts of life and society, without apparent perception even of the fact that his own polemic (which voices his energy of will and mind, after the decline of the merely military instinct) is after all an expression of the instinct of strife, and that he is but seeking to limit other men's militancy to a form of it which he freely exercises, but which they are unable to exercise, by reason either of the censorship or of their lack of literary gift. As for him, when the censor stops or curtails his works in the Russian, he can still publish in other languages.

As is his argument against the sexual and the military instincts, so is his Christist doctrine. His Christism being but the final coincidence of his other bias with his disposition to accept a transcendental religion, his active study of that religion merely means that he will read into it his own tendencies, original and acquired. Of the impartial study of the Gospels as a composite whole, with an equal recognition of all their parts, he is by nature and habit incapable. Christ, the Gospel, is for him a force to be used to express his own will, such as it has become. So he tells us in his book on non-resistance, as earlier in his *Confession*, that Christianity

is not a system of rules, but a new conception of life. That is to say, we are not to gather our idea of Christianity from a detailed inductive study of the Christian books, since by that method we might be led to differ from Count Tolstoy, but from a presupposition or point of view with which he supplies us. From that point of view we shall see things in his way, and notice only those parts of the Gospel which he notices. For, needless to say, in his work on non-resistance he entirely ignores those passages of the Gospels which clash with the doctrine he preaches. The documents must bend to his inclination like the facts of nature and society. And whereas the documents are in a manner the most plastic of all, since every man can restate them in his own way, the logical and biological outcome of Tolstoy's religious activity is inevitably a Tolstoy translation and "harmony" of the Gospels, in which they are actually put in the form which best pleases him. It is all as sequent as the growth of a plant.

II.

If there appears to be any presupposition, any begging of the question, in the foregoing survey, we can start fair and afresh from the new book as it stands, and see to what conclusions it will logically lead us. The translation and harmony of the Gospels, though only now published, was written by Count Tolstoy eighteen years ago, about the same time as his *Confession*, and its preface tells how it came to be composed.

"Reason without faith," he begins, "had already brought me to despair and to a denial of life, but when I once really examined into the life of humanity I became convinced that despair cannot be the destiny of men, and that people have lived, and are now living, by faith. I saw around me people who, having this faith, derived from it an idea of life that gave them strength to live and

strength to die in peace and joy. I could not explain to myself by mere reason this idea. I tried to arrange my life after the lives of those who believe, tried to become one with them, to fulfil the same rules of life and laws of conduct, imagining that in this way the idea of life would be revealed to me also. The more closely I came into communion with the people, lived their life, and fulfilled all the outward religious ceremonies they are accustomed to observe, the more strongly I felt two antagonistic forces struggling with me. On the one hand, a full and complete idea of life, which even death cannot destroy, grew upon me: on the other hand, I discovered much that is false in this outward conception and worship of God."

Here we have the intuitional method at once in full swing, presenting us with subjective truth, but objective falsity. Reason without faith never brought any man to "despair and denial of life"; though faith without reason may have done so, as in the instance of Bunyan. Save in the case of such hypnotism, involving a state of abject terror, despair or the "denial of life" is the expression of a physical state, resulting from organic disease or functional derangement, as is seen by the fact that the same man will at different times accept the same argument in entirely different ways, being sometimes despondent and sometimes serene. It is probable, indeed, that even religious despair as a rule is in the same way at bottom a matter of functional disorder. It never occurs to Tolstoy to notice such facts, because his mind is primarily transcendental and unscientific; and it was because of this cast of mind, with its inability to work by "mere reason," that in his trouble he plunged straight into popular pietism. If he had the faculty of impartial scientific observation, he would have seen that many people who have no religious belief, but are healthily employed, have "strength to live and strength to die in peace and joy." He further writes* that he

* Preface, p. xx.

has found good people in all the different and reciprocally anathematizing sects.

"I found all these different sects to be agreed in their belief as to what is good, what is evil, and how we must live. And they all declared this belief to be the teaching of Christ. However their creeds might differ, they had one and the same basis, and accordingly it is in that common basis we can alone find the truth. It is this truth I now wish to discover. And this truth will be found.....in.....the words of Christ himself."

It is the most glaring non-sequitur ; and the man who makes it is palpably unqualified to discover any truth by a process of elimination or inference. The Christian sectaries in question were no more and no less agreed on right conduct than they would be with Mohammedans or Buddhists, who had never heard of the alleged words of Christ. Russians and Lutherans differ about as much as these in their ethical ideas. Above all, Count Tolstoy might have found among Buddhists or other Hindus those ideas of non-resistance which he did not find among his fellow-Christians. Then the agreement, such as it was, was based not on any written teaching, but on the normal or abnormal moral instinct of civilized men in society ; and the special agreement of Tolstoy with certain Orientals or early Christians on non-resistance is based on certain special causative conditions of body, mind, or environment. The parade of inference is spurious. Our author is merely giving that form to an unchecked process of assumption, which the slightest regard to comparative morals would upset.

The simple egoism of the process is indeed very sufficiently and very plainly evidenced in the first page of the preface. "I perceived," it goes on, "that the people, through their ignorance and want of leisure or inclination for reflection, may be unable to discover what is false ; but that *it is impossible for me not to do so*....."

The trouble is that, scientifically speaking, this is so exquisitely untrue. There is ignorance and ignorance; and there is a species of reflection which is as far from discovering truth as the blankest irreflection. Count Tolstoy's ignorance is of that kind which consists in knowing something of Greek, and ignoring the manifold process of documentary analysis and humanistic reasoning which proves the Gospels to be a mosaic of different times, different hands, different sects, including not only imaginary facts but imaginary teachings, and creating a hallucination round one name by attaching to it the utterances or compositions of a dozen personages or schools. He deals with the Gospels as does a mollah with the Koran, a Brahman with the Vedas, a Talmudist with the Hebrew Bible. Save for variations of text, the veracity of the documents is taken for granted, and the interpretation is either slavish or fantastic, literal or allegorical, as it suits the interpreter to make it.

The tactic of Tolstoy as an interpreter is not less grotesque than any. While professing before all things to go to "the words of Christ," he deliberately sets aside or discredits all the words of Christ which he cannot bring into accord with his own ethical convictions; and he no less deliberately wrests to allegorical meanings those passages which in that way he can turn to his purposes. For instance, on the story of the Marriage Feast of Cana he writes (p. 93):—

"The story of this visit to Cana, in Galilee, an event of which we have such a detailed description in the Gospels, is most instructive as an example of the harm done by accepting the mere letter of the Bible story as inspired revelation. The main incident in itself presents nothing extraordinary or instructive, from whatever point of view we choose to consider it. If we look on it as a miracle, the miracle is meaningless; to consider it a mere trick were to insult Christ; as a picture of daily life, the narrative possesses no value."

Similarly, he makes a clean sweep of such passages as Matt. xiv. 3–5, Mark vi. 17–20, Luke iii. 19–20, Matt. iv. 12, Mark i. 14, John iv. 1–2, John iv. 44–54, Luke v. 1–10, Matt. iv. 19–20, Mark i. 17, 18, on the score that the events there described "have no bearing on the teachings of Christ"; though some of them, *e.g.*, Matt. iv. 19, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men," clearly have such a bearing. Other passages he consents to translate, but discredits as unintelligible, when they are perfectly clear. In particular the verses Matt. xi. 20-24, denouncing on Bethsaida and Chorazin a worse fate at the last day than befel Sodom of old, are handled in an extraordinary fashion. They are "ordinarily translated," writes our harmonist,

"in such a way that they are not only uninstructive, but actually have no meaning at all. Why does Christ reproach the cities? If they did not believe in his miracles, it follows that they had been performed to no purpose, or that he had performed them too sparingly or too badly. But if it is for their disbelief in his miracles that he upbraids them, what are we to understand when told that if the wonders done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes; and that if the miracles performed in Capernaum had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained standing till his day?"

All the while the only noticeable difference made in Tolstoy's own translation is the literal rendering of δυνάμεις by "powers" instead of "mighty works"*—a change made in the margin of the English revised version. And after thus unintelligibly blaming the ordinary translations for leaving the passage unintelligible, he writes:—

"I have tried to give a different translation of the whole passage, but confess that it *does not get rid of all the difficulties.*

* He protests against giving *dynameis* a meaning which "it never had," while he himself a hundred times over puts absolutely different words or phrases in place of those of his text.

The passage, which is obscure and cannot be brought into accord with what precedes or follows, *still remains unintelligible.*"

The one unintelligible thing in the matter is the language of the harmonist. The passage cited is one of the plainest in the four Gospels : it is he who falls into utter confusion and self-contradiction. In another place (p. 326) he complains that Reuss and others are "unwilling to admit the plain and manifest meaning of Christ's words." No commentator has ever shown such unwillingness to the extent he himself has here done. The passage on Chorazin and Bethsaida is an unmistakeable expression of prophetic wrath at their non-belief in the new gospel. They are told that for their mere non-belief in miracles they will suffer worse at the judgment day than the most infamous city of tradition. They, Jewish villages, are denounced as being more unbelieving than the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon. Nobody but Count Tolstoy ever found the passage meaningless or obscure. Nor, to put it plainly, does he. He sees very well that as it stands it is odious : that it distinctly lays down a monstrously immoral principle ; and so he must needs nullify it somehow, in order to keep up the credit of "Christ." His moral nature cannot endure such an outrage on moral feeling as the doctrine that men are to be damned for inability to believe a particular religious assertion ; but his moral nature is still not powerful enough, as against his obscurantism, to lead him to confess outright that these and other such utterances of "Christ" are detestable. *Tantum religio.*

It is characteristic of Tolstoy that he does not even systematically pursue Arnold's plan of arguing that the odious utterances of Jesus cannot really have been made by him : that they must be interpolations. That method, lawless and illogical as it is, is too much in the nature of a sequent system to be followed by him. At most he

sets aside miracle stories as valueless or untrustworthy; and indeed his handling of the birth-myth is sufficiently drastic. He decides first of all that the first verses of "John" are to be translated: "The intelligence of life is the foundation and beginning of all things. The intelligence of life took the place of God and became God." Thus does the self-inspired ignorance of to-day adapt the ignorance of the past. Tolstoy knows or will know nothing of the history of the doctrine of the Logos; and it would never occur to him that the spineless tissue of clauses he is dealing with is made up by successive modifying glosses of the original formula that "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was next to [or *as*] God"—the Logos being in fact a semi-subordinate deity such as Mithra, the Logos of the Magians. What the Gospel must do for Tolstoy is to adapt itself to Tolstoy's mental history; and his "intelligence of life" must be somehow got out of it, at any cost of perversion of language. Then as to the birth-myths we get this (pp. 40-41):—

"He who has once grasped the meaning of the doctrine that the son of God is the intelligence of life, as is set forth in the Gospels, is compelled to regard all this narrative of the events supposed to have preceded the births of John and Jesus, as well as the whole story of Christ's birth and the events immediately following, as *unintelligible* and, what is more important, as *superfluous and noxious fables*.....The sole object of all these miracles is to justify and excuse the low and humble birth of Jesus Christ. .....Jesus was born of a virgin in circumstances that are counted by men to be shameful.....*The shameful birth, and the ignorance of Jesus as to who was his father in the flesh, form the one trait in these verses that has any signification as far as the subsequent teaching of Jesus Christ is concerned.*"

It will be interesting to see how neo-Christians accept this version of the true inwardness of the narrative of the nativity. Here again, as it happens, critical science could supply them with a more agreeable account of

the matter, by showing that the whole story of a virgin-birth is pure pragmatic myth, and that the earlier form of the Gospel disclosed nothing whatever regarding the birth of the prophet. But of course the science which goes to work in this manner plays sad havoc later with matter which new and old Christians alike are zealous to hold by: and they must accordingly choose between the Gospel according to Tolstoy and the Gospel according to Mr. Riley—if, that is, they are to have any definite interpretation at all, which is certainly not a felt want with the average half-believer. Whatever be the religious reception of Tolstoy's view, however, its mere statement is sufficient to upset his remaining exegesis with critical readers. He has here admitted that the Gospels contain "superfluous and noxious fables." How then can he possibly know that they do not contain "superfluous and noxious teachings," or, admitting as he tacitly does that they do, how can he possibly know which are and which are not the teachings of "Christ"? On this rock all the modern Evhemeristic portraiture of the Gospel Jesus, from Renan onwards, goes to logical wreck; but Tolstoy does not even see the point; and after taking eighteen years to think everything over he publishes his "harmony" without even a glance at the objection which destroys his whole undertaking. He is consistently egoistic in his exegesis to the end. What he holds "Christ" to have said, that Christ shall say in his translation. The scientific induction that the Gospels contain the dicta of it-may-be half-a-dozen Messiahs, and as many more compilers and interpolators—this he will not even attempt to argue down, if he has so much as heard of it. It is essential that the interpretation shall be Tolstoyan. So when we come to deal with the myth of the temptation in the wilderness—which to the eye of science is a mere reduction of a mystery ritual (probably Mithraic) to

mythic narrative in the old fashion, as is done with the stories of the Supper and the Resurrection—Count Tolstoy, knowing nothing or caring nothing for historical explanations, works one out for himself in the good old way in the terms of allegory. He has culture enough not to believe in a personal devil; and he is accordingly sure that "the writer" did not either. His words on this head (p. 75) are memorable as showing how a sincere and usually straightforward man can play fast and loose with every principle of evidence to satisfy his own intellectual caprice :—

> "From the entire context of the story, it is evident that the writer, so far from representing under the name 'Satan' an actual personage, *does exactly the contrary*. For if the writer *had wished to represent a real being*, he would have said something about his person, form, shape, and actions; whereas not a single word is said about his personality."

Deliberate fiction could hardly go further. It might as well be pretended that "the writer" did not wish to represent Herod and Judas and Pilate and Peter as personalities, since he says nothing about *their* person, form, shape, and "actions," in the only sense in which he says nothing of the "actions" of Satan in the temptation story. It is perfectly clear that the compilers of the Gospels one and all believed in a real personal devil, as Jesus in particular is represented to have done. Tolstoy is always insisting that people shall follow the "plain meaning" of the Gospels when that meaning squares with his wishes; but no Jesuit could outgo him in his evasions of the plainest meanings when they clash with his own habit of thought. "It is plain," he says here, "that the writer wishes to express the thoughts of Jesus Christ in the simplest manner"—that is to say, the writer invented the fiction of the Devil by way of giving the clearest possible notion of the fact that there is no Devil, but that the evil principle

is in our own nature. The special pleader, in his zeal, ends in reducing his case to the most explicit absurdity. And this is always the mark of the primarily unscientific mind, the mind in which, it may be, moral earnestness and energy of will are well compounded, but the faculty of abstract or logical reasoning is relatively weak. We have in Mr. Gladstone another luminous example of the combination in question, though in his case the hereditary element of worldly wisdom, born in Scotland and bred in Liverpool, guards against such heroic excesses as Tolstoy's, and keeps the politician finally out of the category of the prophets.

III.

A mind which has such a feeble hold as Tolstoy's on the principles of connected reasoning, and which so spontaneously rests its philosophy on its volitions and its intuitions, is bound to frame an absurd whole in its effort to explain life. Intuitions such as Tolstoy's are the stuff out of which have been made all the vain religions of all time, from the fetishism of primitive man to the most modern phases of spiritualism. And every one of these is by fatal necessity a mere complication of a contradiction, the invisibility of which to the believer is due to the fact that the contradiction inheres in his intelligence. Thus Tolstoy assumes to start with that he has "the idea of life," or a comprehension of life, because he sees what he himself wants to do ; and he assumes that the cult to which he sees fit to adhere must be an explanation of life. In point of fact he restates the universal deistic fallacy without so much as glancing at the most familiar objections. He posits God, God's purpose, and God's revelation ; and yet the whole drift of his own exposition is to show (1) that God's purpose is perpetually unfulfilled, and

that men are always doing what Omnipotence means them not to do; and (2) that the revelation has for eighteen centuries been extensively misunderstood, and is further vitiated by "superfluous and noxious fables" which the multitude sincerely believe to be part of the revelation.

"There is no doubt that Luke introduced into his narrative [the Acts] a number of miracles with the view of confirming the faith of believers.....but it is impossible to name a work more calculated to undermine the faith of a modern reader."*

"For more than eighteen hundred years the Churches have been practising this deception [each claiming to have the true faith], cheating themselves and others. In worldly affairs and business matters men are sharp enough to see the cunningest pitfalls laid in their path to entrap them, and will avoid them; but millions of people have for eighteen hundred years and more contentedly lived on with their eyes shut, and allowed themselves to be taken in by this cheat."†

So we have the old theological farce of the Omnipotent God who never gets his own way, and the Omniscient God who never succeeds in making his own plans work. "It is true," says our author, "God is omnipotent; but there is one thing he cannot do, and that is, talk foolishly."‡ Inasmuch as God does but speak as Godites make him, the sad fact is that he never does anything else. "To give men a revelation which it is impossible for them to understand," Tolstoy goes on, "would be to talk foolishly." And this is exactly what he himself affirms to have been done, not only in that millions have on his view lived and died in misunderstanding, but in that he himself, as we have seen, pronounces parts of the revelation to be "unintelligible."

Yet further, Tolstoy presses Godism to its extreme of possible confusion by professedly taking the free view of inspiration while practically founding on the principle

* Preface, p. xxvii. † *Id.*, p. xviii. ‡ *Id.*, p. 22.

of restricted inspiration. "God's revelation," he protests,* "is not to be counted by pages and letters." "Revelation found its first expression in the souls of men." And if the doctrine of God's Fatherhood be not in intention the merest mockery, that revelation, even from a Godite standpoint, must be held to be receptible by all men, or at least all nations, in all ages. Yet the whole of Tolstoy's book proceeds on the assumption that the revelation was only to the early Christians; that they put it in their books, though with many admixtures of error and falsehood; and that it is the business of all the rest of mankind ever since and for evermore to go to those books and puzzle the truth out of them, by way of knowing how they stand to their Father in Heaven. "Faith is the knowledge of a revelation, without which it is impossible to live and think."† "I have to find [in these books] an answer to my question, "What am I, and what is God?'"‡ And Tolstoy declares himself to have found the meaning of life, of God, of himself, in the conception of a revelation of God made to a fraction of mankind, from which thousands of millions of mankind have been excluded by that God's purpose, while of those millions who received it the majority have been systematically cheated by its dispensers, who likewise cheat themselves. Such is "the meaning of life" as we finally have it from one more mouthpiece of well-meaning ignorance, conscientious egoism, and temperamental self-confidence.§ It is some consolation to be able to

* *Id.*, p. 25. † *Id.*, p. 23. ‡ *Id.*, p. 28.

§ For those who believe in "national characteristics" it may be interesting here to note how Dostoyevsky in one of his stories (*Les Précoces*, French trans., p. 223) makes one of his characters cite as true a German's description of the typical Russian student as having "little knowledge and a self-sufficiency without bounds." Compare Tourguenief's *Smoke*.

extract from the imbroglio a notion of the meaning of the phenomenon itself in terms of simple physiology and psychology.

IV.

The more ardent admirers of Tolstoy, it may be, will argue that what he mainly sees in the Gospel teaching, and what he is mainly concerned to pass on to others, is the communistic principle, or in general the sentiment associated with the Sermon on the Mount. Tolstoyans are only too likely to do as Tolstoy does—cite certain passages and stake all on them, while a multiplicity of moral doctrines of the most pernicious sort, in the same books, are either ignored or serenely set aside as "unintelligible." Something of the sort, indeed, has been the method of innovating Christians in all ages. Not one in a thousand of those who profess to be captivated by Christism on its purely ethical merits seems to have taken the trouble to look Christism as a whole fairly in the face. While the orthodox sacramentarians, seeking a base salvation by blood sacrifice, overlook all the inconvenient precepts for conduct, the moralists who admire some of the precepts for conduct overlook everything in the nature of immoral and ferocious dogma ; so that we are alternately presented with a crucifix and a code of altruism, between which false concrete and false abstract the actual pell-mell of Gospel dicta and dogmata vanishes into thin air.

For those who are willing to take some pains to get at the whole truth, and to guard alike against the prepossessions of theology and of sentiment, the Jesuine ethic is no such simple matter ; and the Gospel Jesus no such homogeneous figure. On the contrary, the more the documents are studied, the more incredible does it become that they give the teachings of any one

man or the writings of any set of contemporaries. As mere compositions, the Gospels are things of shreds and patches. Tolstoy argues that the curses on Bethsaida and Chorazin, besides being "unintelligible," do not connect with what goes before and after. But that is true of a hundred sections, nay, of the whole structure of the books. They have no orderly progression: they are visibly aggregates of jottings, oddments, interpolations, of successive generations and of different sects; and some of the "discourses" of Matthew and of John are alike visibly the work of writers, of compilers, not the words of a speaker to hearers. The Sermon on the Mount is as plainly a collection of current maxims as are the books of Proverbs and of Jesus the son of Sirach. And since for whole generations it was evidently open to all manner of Christists to add to the documents whatever they would, making the Christ predict and denounce and exhort as they would have him do, it is impossible for a scrupulous reader to set up for himself any conception of any one Christ as uttering any series of sayings in the medley. The plan of selecting all the teachings which please us, and crediting these to an ideal personage, is not only a defiance of all sound historical method, it is an obvious violence to all our knowledge of human nature. If our Luthers and Arnolds and Renans and Ruskins and Tolstoys themselves talk unequally, and mix what we feel to be good doctrine with bad, what shred of ground have we for assuming that an ancient teacher, necessarily much more ignorant and undisciplined even than they, achieved an unbroken consistency of sweetness and light? Nor is this the only consideration involved. As the wisest man can lapse into unwisdom, so the obscure man may arrive at wisdom for himself. The Christolator, it cannot be too often repeated, degrades mankind in proportion as he exalts his imaginary

paragon. He gives a special and inordinate credit to the Gospel Jesus for doctrines of which some are the mere alphabet of morals, and as such common to all societies, while others are historically known to have been urged by various sects and teachers in various countries before the Jesuine period. Hillel and Buddha, Essenes and Pythagoreans, get at most a patronizing pat for opinions which are held to elevate the Anointed One above all human comparison. And all the while the Christolator imputes no discredit whatever to his prophet for teachings which in the lore of any other religion he would single out for his strongest denunciation.

No amount of sophistry can get rid of the fact that the Gospel Jesus stands in the text as teaching the insane doctrine that whole communities are to be frightfully punished in another life for mere unbelief in his claims; that mere belief in these claims secures salvation; and that on the other hand a mere epithet of contempt incurs risk of the worst future vengeance. Even the inculcation of charity is made by the Christ of the books to stand on the basis of fear of eternal torture; and his doctrine of love, which is common to many another teacher, is more than balanced by the unrivalled virulence of his invective against many of his neighbours. Equally is the communistic doctrine of parts of the Sermon on the Mount balanced by the tacit endorsement of slavery in Luke xvii.; as is the doctrine of enfranchisement from the Judaic law balanced by the express insistence on the fulfilment of that law to the uttermost. The very communism which is fastened-on by Christian Socialists as *the* doctrine of the Master is but an occasional and inconsistent note: and it is practically quashed in the most decisive way by the doctrine that poverty in this world is a blessed thing as securing felicity hereafter. Just as flatly is the occasional note of cosmopolitanism

quashed by the emphatic exclusion of Gentiles and Samaritans from the scope of the evangel. That any one man laid down all these different doctrines in a short space of time is certainly incredible ; but that one man should enunciate some of the contradictions noted is possible enough. And that in the face of such a chaos of contradictions men should profess to find any one consistent and admirable teaching running through the books, is a dismal proof of the frailty of ordinary judgment in the face of a long-standing tradition of adoration.

The great lesson of religious history for the psychological student is that men's belief and reverence are in general as little a result of independent study and judgment as the cut of their garments. A thousand exceptional men must successively strive before a gross delusion begins to be visible as such to the average man ; and their work is constantly being countered by the efforts of men of energy and literary ability who, lacking science and sanity, give zealous voice to the old error, in a new phraseology. At a time when the clergy, so called, are admittedly losing ground as persuaders to faith, their work is being freshly done for them, however little to their liking, by a number of literary men who have little or no qualification for rational persuasion in the matter, and little or no critical preparation for the work, but who have the capacity to put their sentiments, their leanings, their personal preferences and tastes, with more or less attractiveness of literary form and feeling. The new religion of literary and social sentiment makes light of the old dogmas on which earnest believers staked their lives ; but though logically far enough removed from the dogmatists of the past, the new pietists continue to do their work, so far as that work was the unwitting darkening of counsel, the blind leading of men on wrong paths, the waving

of false lights. Such, with all manner of moral aspiration and devotion, is the work of Tolstoy as regards religion. The main comfort in the matter is that the very difference between the old and the new forms of delusion is a testimony to the play of enlightening knowledge; and that the obscurantist of to-day is weaker for harm just in so far as he is less systematic than those of the past, and stronger for good in that he has cast aside some of the worst elements of the faith.

THE FEELING FOR RELIGION.

No rejoinder is more familiar to the critic of religious opinion than this, that what he says is only so much "logic," and that the sphere of religion is "feeling"; that his reasoning is of the head, whereas religion is of the heart. As if all emotion were something eternally alien to reason, and in every aspect unjustifiable by common sense; as if right thinking yielded no exultations; and as if this rejection of reason were in any way different from any other antinomian movement of feeling whatever. The plea is itself one of the phenomena of religion, and as such is worth a moment's scientific notice.

Comparatively considered, its outstanding aspect is its profound dishonesty. Let the Christian who rebels against reason be sent as missionary to a simpler people, who cling to their faith on grounds of feeling as genuine as his: and then see what quarter he allows to that psychic appetite in them which in his own case he does not scruple to make the supreme law. They cling to the Gods of their fathers, the ways of their childhood; and he, ear-plugged for such criticism of his own shibboleths, proceeds mechanically to show them that their creeds are absurd and inconsistent, irreconcilable with common sense and common morals. For their idols his criteria are those of the grossest materialism: with the tests which he refuses to apply to his mysteries he pelts theirs; their cravings he credits to the devil; their

slow reception of his logic to their hardness of heart—for it is only *his* heart that is to have its own way. Through the whole patristic literature of Christianity this is the regimen: critical analysis and derision for the beliefs of the pagan; but against the reacting analysis of reason the cry of vicious self-will, "*Non in dialectica.*" Dialectic is the test for other people's beliefs: never for the Christian's.

In the Gospels themselves, be it observed, while there is the occasional demand that those of another opinion should be "as little children" to the new creed, not only is there no reciprocity of such open-mindedness, but there is the constant assumption that the point is settled by the police-court evidence of miracles, against which the "heart" of Jew or Gentile is to have no rights. He that believeth not shall be damned, deeper than the sinners of Sodom. He had his chance: he would not see the evidence: his heart was hardened: that precarious organ which in the Christian's breast is to be its own warrant when hardened against the critic. I have lately seen a letter by a distinguished scholar and clergyman in which he says, in answer to a criticism: "I confess myself to be quite unable to refute the objections which can be brought against belief in Christ and in the Heavenly Father. The Gospel does not explain away difficulties: it wins hearts." As did Islam, and the cult of Aphrodite Pandemos. The believer adds the remark that he cannot believe, what probably the critic believes, that "we are all *automata*, irresponsible products of Nature." No such belief exists; but if it did, how could the irrationalist Christian arraign it? If it should "win hearts," what more were wanted by his own law? By what right does *he* demand rationality from other people?

It is probably quite impossible to bring such disputants to the reason they repudiate, but it may be

possible here and there to head off some one from the path of emotional self-indulgence before the vice is unconquerable. The first thing to note is that the appeal to feeling and the heart is never the first shift, but always the last; and that to begin with there is as much warrant of feeling and emotion on the critical side as on the credent. Let the believer hearken to his own scientific prophets, who can tell him that every movement of mind has its reflex of emotion; and let him remember that at the beginning of the issue he and the doubter stood alike upon feeling, one saying, "This is divinely true"; the other, "This surely cannot be true." It is the unbeliever's "heart" as truly as his head that revolts from perceived monstrosities of narrative and ethic, theory and precept. Nor is there on the believer's side the slightest antipathy to revolt from belief as such so long as it is not *his* belief that is challenged. Catholic, he is tenderness itself to the revolt of the early Christian against Pagan polytheism and Pagan images; Protestant, he glows at the thought of his fathers' sacred revulsion from the mass and Mariolatry. There is no thought there of denying that *un*belief can have its springs in feeling, any more than of pretending that argument is not a way to ascertain religious truth. Is my feeling, then, less valid because it does not move me, in the fashion so constantly associated with movements of expressly religious feeling, to riot and destruction, the profanation of temples and the breaking of images, but sets me only upon decent discussion? Rather the believer, so long as he feels sure of his ground, would reproach me if I showed heat, charging me with prejudice, and tracing my heresy to my self-will. It is only against Pagan Gods and the temples of the wrong creed that he sees passion to be spontaneously right.

Some believers in all ages, it is true, have reproached fellow-believers who were given to the use of coherent

argument. John Howe was so reproached, who himself insisted that "God must create the new heart," and denounced those who "got nothing by the Gospel but a cold, spiritless, notional knowledge."* An evangelical biographer severely observes that "Similar complaints have been made of the apostle Paul. They come from persons who like not to exercise the *mind* upon religion —persons who care not to *think*, in order to believe; who wish for edification without the trouble of getting information; who prize feeling more than judgment; who are ruled by impulses, not evidence."† He might have added that it is this temper that leads to absolute antinomianism, as among Paul's incestuous converts, and those who in Scotland last century were wont to pray, "Lord, save us from the crooked paths of morality."‡ The specific aversion to reason as "cold" ends in the conception of "cauld morality," noted for us by Burns. But the difference among believers on these heads seems to be only one of degree. It is only the most witless who renounce reason even for purposes of piety. Howe, meeting no systematic polemic against his creed, claimed to hold it by reason and to appeal to evidence. Had he lived to incur more effective attack, he would have fallen back on his heart, as doubtless would his biographer.

It is when he is beaten past his last ditch, when every honest argument fails and he stands naked of rational justification, that the normal religionist of our day discovers the inefficacy of reason, the impropriety of logic. He bethinks him of his heart only when his head fails him. Has he not on his shelves a score of vindications

* *The Redeemer's Tears Wept Over Lost Souls.* 1846 edition of Howe's Select Works, p. 47.

† Urwick's *Memoir.* Same edition, p. 7.

‡ *Life and Diary of John Blackader.* Crichton's edition, 1825, p. 180.

of his faith, a whole troop of the tribe of Paley, the latest a day old? If religion be wholly of the heart, why these reams of Christian Evidences, these philosophic batteries against the Atheist? It is not that the faithful are divided into two camps, one arguing with unbelief, the other disclaiming argument. All alike, broadly speaking, argue while they feel they can, and would but rejoice the more if the argument availed; it is only when the fight goes too hard with them, when they can no longer parry the thrust, that they discover the non-jurisdiction of the judge they had themselves invoked. And if on the other hand the unbeliever were maladroit or ignorant, and failed to confute *their* claims or rebut *their* objections, and should thereupon tell them that his "heart" repelled their creed and his "feelings" their logic, what execrations would they not heap upon that heart and those feelings! With what fervour would they not reiterate the formula that so long did duty for their fathers: "It is the corrupt *heart* that rejects the clear proofs of the truth of the Gospel; it is the obstinate passion of the carnal man that will not listen to the irresistible demonstration of divine philosophy." And these people, with their record of subterfuge and tergiversation, having finally professed to be established in faith solely and sufficiently by their hearts and their feelings, turn upon us and claim to be respected because they are what they are.

If this blind clinging to a discredited belief went with as stedfast a clinging to righteousness; if this appeal to the law of the heart came from hearts ruled by mercy and goodwill, one would readily enough accord a perplexed sympathy, and waive censure. But after studying the "religious animal" as watchfully as I might and in as many types as I could meet with, I came a good while ago to the sincerely sad conclusion—for there is no comfort in it to a serious mind—that though there

may be amiable and honourable spirits among the professed devotees of the "heart's" cultus, the majority are as ready to be unjust as to be unreasonable, and that many are nearly as often malevolent as unjust. What meanness and smallness, what defect of sane humility and decent diffidence, what spontaneous malice towards those who dissent from their creed, and what chronic backbiting of their own brothers and sisters in the faith, may not the silent observer note among the religious multitude whithersoever he turns! Ignorant women, docile only to the priest, and not always to him, vie with fanatical men in the arrogance of their censure of their better-instructed and more scrupulous neighbours: repeating all the while with mindless complacency their formulas: "Judge not that ye be not judged"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth"; "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.....love seeketh not its own, is not provoked.....rejoiceth not in unrighteousness.....beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Where in the history of Christendom has that love been manifested?

Listening to what men claim for Christianity as the regenerator of the heart, one wonderingly asks oneself at times: "Do they think we have not seen unrolled the historic spectacle of Christian cruelties through all the ages, from the story of their mythic Peter, passing from forgiven treason to slay by miracle for trivial fraud, down to the day when one Bible-worshipping and Protestant community prepares to fall upon another with fire and sword over a question of franchise? Do they think we do not know them as they are in daily life, two out of four of them steadily selfish and grasping, one out of the four malicious, nine out of

ten capable of gleeful injustice to an unbeliever?"

There is a danger of catching their spirit in commenting on their claims ; but when, purging one's heart as far as may be of ill-feeling, one seeks to find among even the refined and cultured pleaders for the scope of the "heart" in religion a sign of a real cultivation of impartial human-kindness, one is wofully at a loss. I bethink me of two accomplished and distinguished women, one dead, one living, both so fully enlightened as to rank with unbelievers, yet both clinging emotionally to the threshold of the temple—I mean George Eliot and Mrs. Humphry Ward, publicists both, and open to criticism, as they have freely criticised. If their twofold temper had made them exceptionally just and catholic-minded, sensitive to the inspirations of Freethinker and pietist alike, loyal to reason and truth while tender to superstition, they would have furnished a weighty vindication of their own doctrine. But precisely in so far as they have leant emotionally towards what they confess to be the incredible or the unprovable, the traditional and conventional and popular as against the rational and the critical, they become rather vessels of wrath than fountains of peace, positively failing in the faculty of rational and critical justice.

George Eliot, we know, was so twy-natured that she could not translate Strauss's chapter on the crucifixion without the sustenance of the sight of a crucifix in biscuit-ware ; and her letters contain more than one spiteful stroke at those who were not so fashioned as to feel with her. On the subject of race sentiment she resisted political rationalism as hotly and almost as abusively as Mr. Froude. But let us take her in the sphere of her art, where if anywhere she was bound to subordinate her likes and dislikes, and see how in *Romola* she grows shrill in her anger, through the mouth of one of her characters, at those who would

not sentimentalize as she did. It is in the chapter which describes the Florentine procession on the day of San Giovanni. Francesco Cei, the poet and humourist, makes fun of the customary spectacle ; and Pietro Cennini, the printer, furiously rebukes him for jesting,

"'when the great bond of our Republic is expressing itself in ancient symbols, without which the vulgar would be conscious of nothing beyond their own petty wants of back and stomach, and never rise to the sense of comity in religion and law. There has been no great people without processions, and the man who thinks himself too wise to be moved by them to anything but contempt is like the puddle that was proud of standing alone while the river rushed by!' No one said anything after this indignant burst of Cennini's till he himself spoke again."

The pretence that such didactics passed current in Florence in 1492 is as unconvincing as any in the book. They are in fact the pure coin of a pseudo-positivism of the nineteenth century ; and the passage is inartistically and polemically written at contemporary common-sense in England, in the naïve trust that scorners can be thus silenced, in life as in fiction. Cei in the real Florence would not have been so readily put down, could such an issue have arisen there ; and more circumspect moderns will really not bow dumbly to such declamation, however irate be the sibyl. We should know from the rest of the book itself, if we knew not otherwise, how profoundly empty is the rhetoric about "great peoples" and the "great bond" of their procession. With their precious bond in full parade, the Florentines were going down to Hades by way of eternal feud and chronic massacre ; and if there were any hope for them in 1492 it may well have lain in the humour that saw the foolish side of the ancient show of fraternity among men thirsting for each other's ruin and exile. It certainly could not lie with the blusterous pedants who complacently contemplated an eternal continuity of vulgar life, never dreaming of putting instruction in place of

ignorance, but rather cherishing the ignorance because it best maintained the ways of the ignorant past. And we who know the way Florence went within a generation of 1492, and desire to see our own polity develop more sanely, are not to be bluffed into conformity by a gospel of processions, backed by whatever fierceness of aspersion against the spirit of reason.

The sinister aspect of George Eliot's conservatism lies in the fact that she knew the truth, and yet lashed herself up to the false sentiment of set purpose, being determined to secure for her hysteria as high a status as was claimed by other people's science. When she makes Cennini in the same chapter speak of "the triumph of the Guelfs, which means the triumph of Florentine will, which means triumph of the popolani," she can make another carry on the parable sceptically and justly and Florentinely enough: "which means triumph of the fat popolani over the lean, which again means triumph of the fattest popolani over those who who are less fat." Such was the fact; but all the same we must get that tirade about processions, aimed at unsentimental reformers in England. All sentiments are to be respected—such is the implication—save those which are intelligent, critical, reconstructive.

Mrs. Humphry Ward, in turn, writing as a kind of Kantian or Rousseauite Theist, comes forward as the mediator between belief and unbelief; and her way is to make out that any phase of popular superstition, however crude and vulgar, calls for the tender consideration of the enlightened, while at her own hands the popular rationalism that meets vulgar superstition on a plane certainly not lower than its own is not merely not treated with a grain of sympathy for its straightforwardness and sincerity, but is angrily aspersed, libelled, belied. Aiming her slander at an actual freethinking organization, the novelist speaks of its members as she might of

a gang of Hooligans, and makes the absolutely untrue assertion that they would glare with ill-will at a clerical visitor, when there is not an organized freethinking group in the three kingdoms that would not eagerly invite such a visitor to speak on its platform, only too glad to get a parson to stand up for his creed. And when the libel is pointed out and remonstrance made, not a word either of vindication or apology is forthcoming. The novelist doubtless thought that she had turned the balance finally to pure benevolence when she made her malignant "crew" of unbelievers turn quasi-Socinian saints under the spell of the prophet, in the inexpensive fashion of the sentimental psychologist.

And yet again, in a later work, the amiable Theist, not content with taking care that "the Whig dogs don't get the best of the argument"—even to the extent of obscurely suggesting that Voltaire was an Atheist, or else that Kant was a defender of orthodox Christianity—represents another "Secularist crew" as openly attacking a group of pietists with missiles—a thing no known body of Freethinkers ever did, or would dare to do if they were so minded, in any town in Great Britain; where, on the other hand, freethinking meetings are still occasionally menaced and even actually assailed and broken up by the violence of Christians. Such are the literary methods of the cultured sentimentalist standing nominally between rationalism and emotionalism; such the fruits of the most distinguished development of the cultus of "the heart" on the side of religion. The novelist in question reprobates what she calls "dry scorn" of supernaturalism. Her own scorn may in comparison be damp—it is certainly not crisp—but it will hold its own for acridity with any on the other side. I should consider a Freethinker demoralized if he showed as much malice towards the Christian crowd who had sought to deprive his leader of his civil rights, and of

whom not a few would take satisfaction in his financial ruin.* It is only people conscious of having an inner law above reason who can be so complacent in a temper of comprehensive ill-will. Yet when we see how little it all avails to secure for the intermediate type the countenance of those religionists whose habit of mind she assumes to be so indispensable to a right life—when we see Mrs. Ward repulsed from the sanctuary by such intellectual forces as Lord Halifax and Mr. H. P. Hughes —it is impossible to think of her case without compassion. What other Theists think of being placed by her in the position of imploring fellowship from minds of the tenth order, as Mr. Arnold would put it, it is for them to say.

If we turn from the professors of a theistic or pseudo-positivist cult of sentiment to some of the types that pass for saintly among out-and-out Christians, we still meet at times a disenchanting shock. It is pleasant, indeed, to note how Newman passed from the confessedly bitter fanaticism of his youth, through the quiet martyrdom of neglect and subjection in his chosen Church, to a state of serenity and tolerance which for once does credit to the anti-rationalist cause. But some types which in England rank as high as Newman present a less congruous record. Keble is almost the supreme saint of modern Anglicanism ; and yet when we find him put to a real test of his professed ideal, by the mere parliamentary proposal to correct the gross abuses of the Irish Church, with what a fury of resentment does he imprecate the wrath of heaven on the perfectly honest and temperate politicians who urged it ! The

* There is unfortunately no difficulty in giving evidence as to *this* allegation. Broadly speaking, every freethinking tradesman knows that to avow rationalism is, for him, to lose business. The main tactic of the campaign against Bradlaugh was to aim at making him bankrupt.

test of the moral value of the specifically religious and anti-rational temper is not the serenity or elevation with which a man words his devotions when things go well with him. Paul's praise of love is not the measure of Paul's loving kindness: the measure is supplied when Paul is crossed, and passes from stringing praises of all-enduring love to throwing angry epithets at his strayed sheep. The measure of the saintliness of Keble is given not in the pious poetry framed in balmy air and glad meditation, but in the virulent verses which shout his rage at the anti-ecclesiastical political reformer. The charity of the early Christian is to be known not from his sacred books, but from his handling of the sacred images he once had crowned, his defilement of the altars at which his mother had knelt. The power of renewed religious zeal to purify the affections is to be learned not from sentimental romances, but from the furious literature of Lutheran and Calvinist, as red with rage as the Rome of their own objurgation. Our amateur psychologists are as likely as not to catch at the defence that the rabid Protestant really spoke from the "head," and was unduly given to argument. One can but say that the champion of "the heart" must go in any case in the same fatal category, his own course being none the less argumentative because the argument is so bad. And, sooth to say, his obstinacy in a bad cause savours as much of the head, of what men call wrong-*headed*ness, as of any other aspect of personality.

What would seem to be proved by all the phenomena is that the mere cult of sentiment or bias as such, the principle of giving "the heart" its own way in matters of creed, is no security whatever for right-heartedness, but rather a snare thereto. And how should it be otherwise? The plea is not "Leave me to love as I would," it is "Leave me to think and do as I would"—exactly what Kingsley crookedly charged on those who called

themselves Freethinkers ; and why should any one form of mere wilfulness be more sanative than the rest? If what the religionist craved were freedom merely to cherish an ideal of goodness, or to practise goodwill towards men, the case would be very different ; but there is no effort of that order. What is demanded for "the heart" is that it shall be allowed to legitimate a given set of dogmas, involving all manner of bigotries ; a given set of narratives, flouting good feeling and good sense alike ; and a given set of observances, proceeding on and implying those narratives and those dogmas. Such an indulgence of self-will, call it of the heart or of the head, is no more sanative than indulgence in alcohol. George Eliot, in a stoical moment, talked of "doing without opium," not recognizing, perhaps, that there are more narcotics than one ; but the principle is eminently sane. And if it be finally pleaded by some sufferer that for him opium is the merciful and even the medicinal regimen, the answer is simple. "Confess that you are on the sick-list, and the discussion is partly solved. But you had better choose between getting back to health and being a drugged organism to the end ; and you would do well to spare us in the meantime the expression of your sense of moral superiority and of our spiritual defects."

Such abstention, however, will not be practised. It is one of the subtle compensations made to the organism by what used to be called the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, that to the average personality its own deficiencies actually come to figure as merits. The man with no head for mathematics does not on that score hang the head he has : rather he takes comfort in the intuition that the mathematical faculty is a poor and mechanical endowment ; and if he be Sir William Hamilton, he demonstrates to his own satisfaction that its absence is a condition of philosophical superiority. Short of

positive malady, even physical weakness sets up a compensating sense of the obtuseness of the strong, and of the weakling's own superior sensibility. But nowhere is the compensating instinct more signally successful than among the invalids of the intellectual life. When two lads strip by the water's edge, and one, exultant, takes the plunge, coming back flushed with strength from the cold salt bite of the sea, while the other, flinching and shivering, recoils from the shock and slinks back into his clothes, the latter is probably not ready to sermonize the other on his lack of emotional development, or on being all head and no heart. He is apt for the moment to have a cowed perception that there are strong hearts and weak hearts, and that his recoil may as plausibly be set down to deficiency as to superabundance in that element. But in the life of the spirit there appear to be no such misgivings. There the weakling is sure of his merit, sure that the hardy following of truth and reason comes of low organization; sincerely concerned that other organisms should run to "cold" fortitude and "dry" self-possession in presence of a discredited superstition. The invalid's hysteria is the standard of spiritual soundness; you are not healthy unless you have his disease.

That the process is at bottom biological may be seen from the ease with which the religious man's self-satisfaction takes on at need either the hysterical or the quasi-intellectual tone. When we are not being told by neuropaths that we are stunted in our emotions, we are being informed by thinkers of the order of Mr. Drummond that we are lacking in certain powers of intellectual cognition. The imputed lack, on inquiry, is found to consist either in incapacity to detect philosophic beauty in a series of indecently nude paralogisms, or in unreadiness for a species of credulity in which Mr. Drummond is distanced by ninety-nine Catholic peasants out of a

hundred, as these in turn are distanced by most savages. Serious rebuttal of such pleas would be but an exhibition of a genuine lack of perception. The psychological interest lies for us in the absolute complacency of piety over its own limitations. If it cannot follow a process of reasoning, it is because reasoning is the resort of spiritual blindness ; if it dare not breathe the air of free reason, it is because courage is brutalizing ; if it cannot endure plain truth, it is because the well-bred heart must have nobler fare than the plebeian brain. Somewhat thus does the lusty wine-bibber look down on the water-drinker ; but the wine-bibber bears himself genially in comparison. He has not the virulence of conceit which belongs to the religious consciousness, and to that order of temperament which carries into the field of quasi-rational morals the religious inspiration of hysteria.

Having faithfully noted the phenomenon for what it is, we may permit ourselves to testify that, apart from the intellectual and psychic defects which make possible the attitude we have been studying, that attitude visibly involves and developes a rather painfully marked defect on the side of instinct itself. Even as the rational spirit has its healthy life of the heart under its own flag, because it has set out by acknowledging its whole nature, so does the irrationalist, who sets out by regulating one natural and worthy instinct, in name of one which becomes unworthy through its very lawlessness, end by losing the instinctive faculty he thrusts aside. For, to come to the positive side of our case, there is a feeling for truth as well as a feeling for religion ; and it falls to be said that every one of those who have championed the cause of the feeling for psychological opium has exhibited to us a weakened feeling for truth, and by consequence a further weakened faculty for reasoning. The sequence is fatal. All of

us, indeed, can only too easily stumble into fallacy even when we would fain be logical; but when for a discipline of mental self-correction we substitute a law of mental self-indulgence there can be small question, *à priori* or *à posteriori*, as to the resulting worsenment. The late Mr. R. H. Hutton was wont to allow himself in the *Spectator*, during many years, a chronic polemic against all manifestations of rationalism; and he thought to conduct it logically on the premiss that the feelings are to try every cause in advance. The end was that his sense of the value of an argument was substantially destroyed. It is the wont of his school to charge on Naturalists an extremity of arrogance, as "denying that there is anything higher than themselves in the universe." Met by the reminder that the man who says an infinite universe transcends his comprehension is surely much less arrogant than the man who claims to comprehend it in terms of his own mind and character, Mr. Hutton evolved a serious argument by which he believed himself to prove that true humility consists in feeling Omnipotence to be like ourselves, and spiritual arrogance in thinking that to be inconceivable. His mind had become a paralogistic machine.

It is necessary to deal at length with the simple devices of those who tell us that "truth-hunting" may become a dangerous passion, selecting as an example, of all people, Coleridge,* who actually preached their own doctrine, and flinched from truth as he would from a cold bath. The thesis is a pure sophism. Truth is certainly to be pursued with a due regard to the paying of our bills; but the pursuit of it is not more likely to be demoralizing in that regard than is the quest of titillations for the heart, or even of the higher æsthetics. Lamb was nobly self-sacrificing; but Leigh Hunt, who

* So Mr. Birrell, in his *Obiter Dicta*.

was not, was equally a man of feeling ; and his finance will hardly compare with Spinoza's. No less irrelevant is the outcry against the uninvited impact of verity. The point is one of ordinary good manners. Truth, like water, however prized by ourselves, is not to be cast upon others against their will. But there has grown up in these latter generations, under pressure of the prevailing economic conditions, a perverse distaste for any purveyance whatever of doctrine that, on a chance meeting, is likely to disturb the orthodox. Carlyle was able to make himself believe that his careful silence about his heresy was in perfect keeping with his own maxim that the last cowardice is the fear that truth may be dangerous ; and he saw in Strauss a reprehensible revealer of what wise men kept to themselves. In our own day, the mere economic stress heightening despite a lessening of the *odium theologicum*, we find men of letters anxiously intimating that they have no sympathy with criticism of a religion in which they do not profess to believe. Professor Saintsbury, the other day, in his indigent treatise on Matthew Arnold, thought fit to charge on that writer a passion for discrediting current religious beliefs. Professor Saintsbury himself is so far from any constitutional repugnance to negation that his whole output is deformed by his bias to it. He is incapable of writing a page without incidental acidulous disparagement of all who may not share his views on a given point ; and he has negated more ideals than any scribe of his generation. So far from shunning to offend, he has no joy in writing if he do not with every affirmation make a thrust and a grimace at possible dissidents. It is a far poorer motive than concern for human susceptibilities that moves him in this matter to play the pedagogue to Arnold, whose weakness was, if anything, to lose himself in palliating negative criticism, and to turn every

critical process in religion to affirmative account, as far as possible on conservative lines.

Yet another journalist critic, who writes nearly as well as Mr. Saintsbury writes ill, thinks fit to follow the Professor's ethical lead, telling us that he "cannot understand an enthusiasm for a negation." He really does injustice to his powers of comprehension. I have read perhaps fifty of his *critiques*—for they are nearly always extremely readable—and I can testify that in two cases out of three they are purely negative, and even enthusiastically so. It is their chief shortcoming that they are too seldom intellectually constructive, even when laudatory; rarely substitutive of a right theory for a wrong even when detecting the wrong. They are spontaneously and at times almost monotonously negative. Here again there is clearly no validity in the pretence of moral recoil from negation. There is a mere recoil, however motived, from that one species of criticism which, above all others, is committed to construction in the place of what it seeks to destroy, if it would succeed in destroying. And in each case the attitude is seen to involve either a blunting of judgment, to the point of moral no less than logical miscarriage, or a blunting of conscience. The phenomenon grows usual.

And see the literary result. Precisely as men give themselves up to the conventional view that religion is dead, and therefore to be well spoken of—*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*—or that it is in bad taste to quarrel with your flesh-pots, their literary importance somehow dwindles. The men of this and the last generation who retain intellectual influence are precisely those who faced the large issues fairly, whichever side they took. Mill, Ruskin, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, affirmed and negated more or less as they seriously "felt" and thought; Mr. Spencer and Mr. Huxley did not acquire

weight by ignoring the main problems; and the poets of our own time who weigh with thinking people have avowed or revealed their thought likewise. But if we take the rather lengthy list of writers who latterly have cultivated conformity without giving credence, we do but get a group of men who, in some cases possessing high capacity, produce no "literature of power" whatever, and not much even of the literature of form that will endure. Professor Saintsbury, though industrious as regards length of perambulation, and though not devoid of critical perceptiveness, has not in all his books uttered one memorable thought or penned one important page; and his style is simply the worst of his century. The other critic I have quoted, once of great promise, makes no noticeable progress; and yet others, of laudable industry, grow neither in power nor in grace. Men who began with an apparent capacity for great things attain, through diligent avoidance of all deep questions, to the perfect security of a mediocrity which is only in the financial sense golden, showing, however, a troubled consciousness of their descent by flings at those who will not join them.

If then the "feeling for religion" and the feeling for that feeling—to give the last-considered phenomenon its highest possible status—are thus alike found to avail only for obstruction and paralysis, philosophic fallacy and literary frustration, making no man or woman better, wiser, or kindlier, on what tenable pretext are they to override the feeling for truth, for honesty, for manliness? If negation is to be disallowed, why are *these* always to be negated? "A question not to be asked," or, if asked, not to be answered save by the framer. We are dealing not with the rational rejection of what is seen to be either fallacious or noxious, but with the more or less corrupt instinct to conserve the usual and conform to the conventional—an instinct

forever wont to parade in the garb of wisdom, moderation, and sympathy. I have sought to show the quality of the sympathy and the moderation as well as of the wisdom.

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Modern Rationalism. *Being a Sketch of the Progress of the Rationalistic Spirit in the Nineteenth Century.* By JOSEPH MCCABE. 163 pp.; cloth, 2s. 6d. post free.—In a succession of six interesting and informing sketches, Mr. McCabe delineates the work of the critical or Agnostic spirit in theology, Biblical Criticism, Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Science, and Ethics. One derives from the work a useful general notion of the secularization of thought during the last hundred years, and Mr. McCabe's numerous allusions to prominent Rationalists and their teachings render his book a handy work of reference.

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PAMPHLETS.

An Agnostic View of the Bible. By S. LAING, author of *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, *Human Origins*, etc. 31 pp.; 6d., by post 7d.—Mr. Laing reviews the primitive cosmogony of the book of Genesis, criticizes the account of the Deluge in the light of modern geology and historical research, and, without using a word of discourtesy towards the orthodox, calmly disproves the credibility of the Old Testament tradition.

Possibilities and Impossibilities. By T. H. HUXLEY, F.R.S. 14 pp.; 3d., by post 3½d.—The Professor points out that the Jesus of the Gospels implicitly believed in demonic beings, such as those who figure in the story of the Gadarene swine. He alleges that, for anything he can absolutely prove to the contrary, such beings might exist, and, by scientific instances and a logical discussion of the meaning of "possibility," he maintains that one may reasonably admit the possibility of the existence of demons. The Professor, however, only debates the subject in the interest of clearness of thought, and he emphatically declares that, in his opinion, the evidence for the New Testament demonology is utterly valueless.

The Claims of Christianity Examined from a Rationalist Standpoint. By CHARLES WATTS. 62 pp.; 6d., by post 7d.—In a lucid and orderly method, especially suited for the needs of

young men and women of an inquiring habit of mind, the well-known Freethought propagandist combats the theses laid down in Dr. Alexander Stewart's *Handbook of Christian Evidences*. His principal chapters deal with Theism, Revelation, Miracles, Christ's Personality and Resurrection, and the Influence of Christianity.

From Rome to Rationalism; or, Why I Left the Church. By JOSEPH MCCABE (lately Very Rev. Father Antony, O.S.F.). 26 pp.; 4d., by post 5d. Mr. McCabe examines the problems that centre round the conceptions of God, the Soul, and Christ, and concludes with an entire rejection of supernatural doctrines.

The New Conversion. By F. J. GOULD. 14 pp.; 1d., by post 1½d.—In this lecture the author translates the doctrine of Conversion into terms which harmonize with Rationalist modes of thought. The pamphlet is not so much an argument as an appeal, and may be appropriately placed in the hands of earnest persons whose faith in the Christian system is beginning to waver, and who are looking for a new moral basis.

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The Building of the Bible. *Showing the Chronological Order in which the Books of the Old and New Testaments appeared according to Recent Biblical Criticism; with Notes on Contemporary Events.* By F. J. GOULD. 24 pp.; 3d., by post 4d.—In a succession of clearly-arranged paragraphs, each devoted to a particular century, Mr. Gould exhibits a scheme which "represents in a general way the manner in which the component parts of the Bible followed one after the other, from the eleventh century B.C. to the second C.E. (Christian Era)." The little manual should be of service to the students of Biblical criticism, as, in the perusal of large works on the subject, it is very important to preserve a steady view of the chronology of Jewish and Christian Literature.

Plan of Moral Instruction. By F. J. GOULD. 15 pp.—No price is marked on this publication, as it is intended for free distribution. The publishers will send single copies gratis to any applicants, and quantities will be supplied on the following terms:—One dozen, 6d.; a hundred, 2s. 6d.; a thousand, 18s. 6d. —The "Plan" sums up the leading arguments in favour of secular moral instruction, and submits a detailed syllabus of ethical lessons. The paper has been adopted by the Moral Instruction League, and is well adapted for circulation among school teachers and managers, members of Parliament, School Boards, etc.